

# TOM GATES

BY THE  
WINNER  
OF THE  
ROALD  
DAHL  
FUNNY PRIZE  
2011

## Excellent Excuses (and other good stuff)

BY L. Pichon

Brilliant!

YEAH!

Me

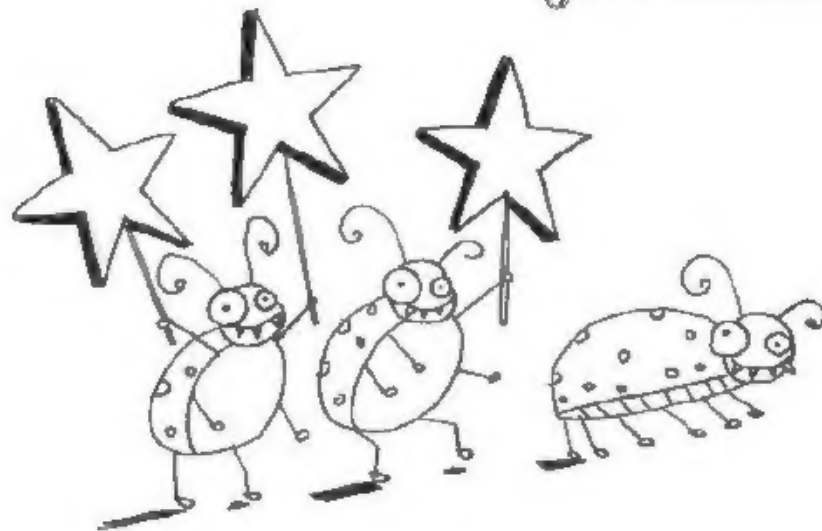
TOM

Bodge  
Brothers  
→

Agh!

You get **THREE**  
**GOLD STARS**

for reading  
this book  
(good choice).



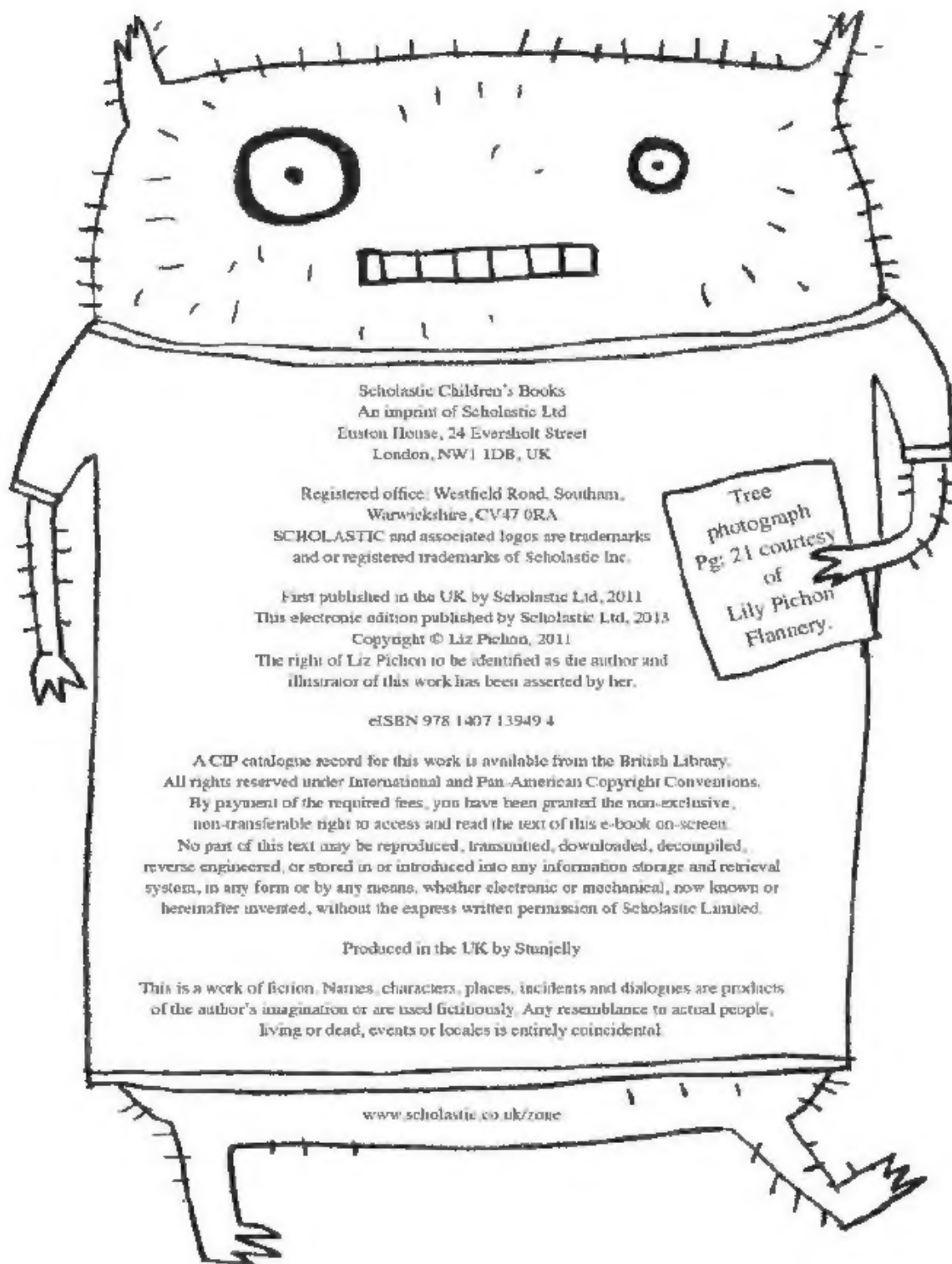




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By Liz Pichon





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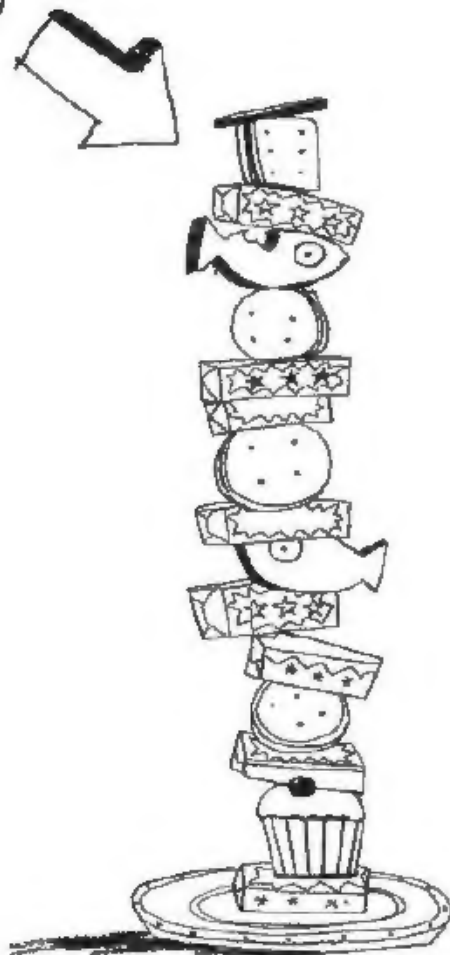
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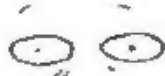
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(Homework snacks.)






Wake up  this morning and suddenly remember something absolutely




 **BRILLIANT!**




I can forget ALL about lessons  
(and irritating things like   
Marcus Meldrew). And concentrate  
on **GOOD** stuff like:

☺ **I**nventing **new** ways to annoy  
my sister Delia.  (So many!)

☺ **D**rawing pictures  Hal Hal  
(that annoy Delia).

☺ **W**atching **TV** ☹☹ and  
eating caramel wafers. 

☺ **E**ating caramel wafers   
and watching **TV**. ☹☹

And **most** importantly...

-Band practice for

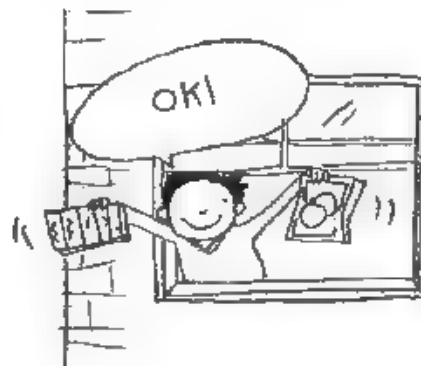
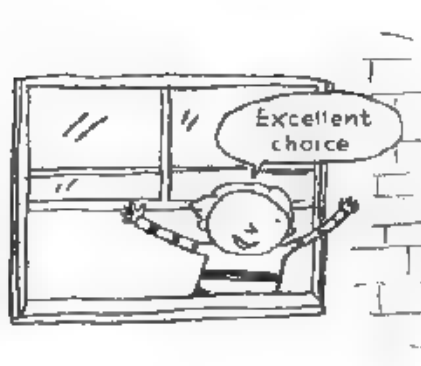
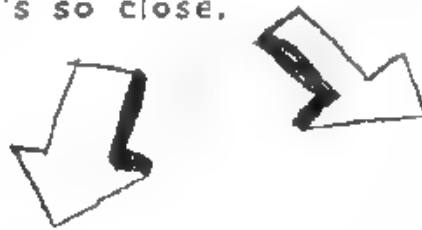
**DOG  
ZOMBIES**



with Derek →   
(who's my best mate and  
next-door neighbour).

Tonight we're planning a sleepover  
at his. Which is easy ○ to do  
as he's so close.

zzzzzzzzzz



One of the other 'great' things about going to Derek's is he **doesn't** have an annoying sister (like me) ...



... **AND** he has a dog called Rooster.



Which I know is a stupid name for a dog, but I'm getting used to it (sort of).



Sometimes Rooster can be 'almost' as annoying as Delia. Especially when he won't stop



Occasionally Derek throws him a  to shut him up.



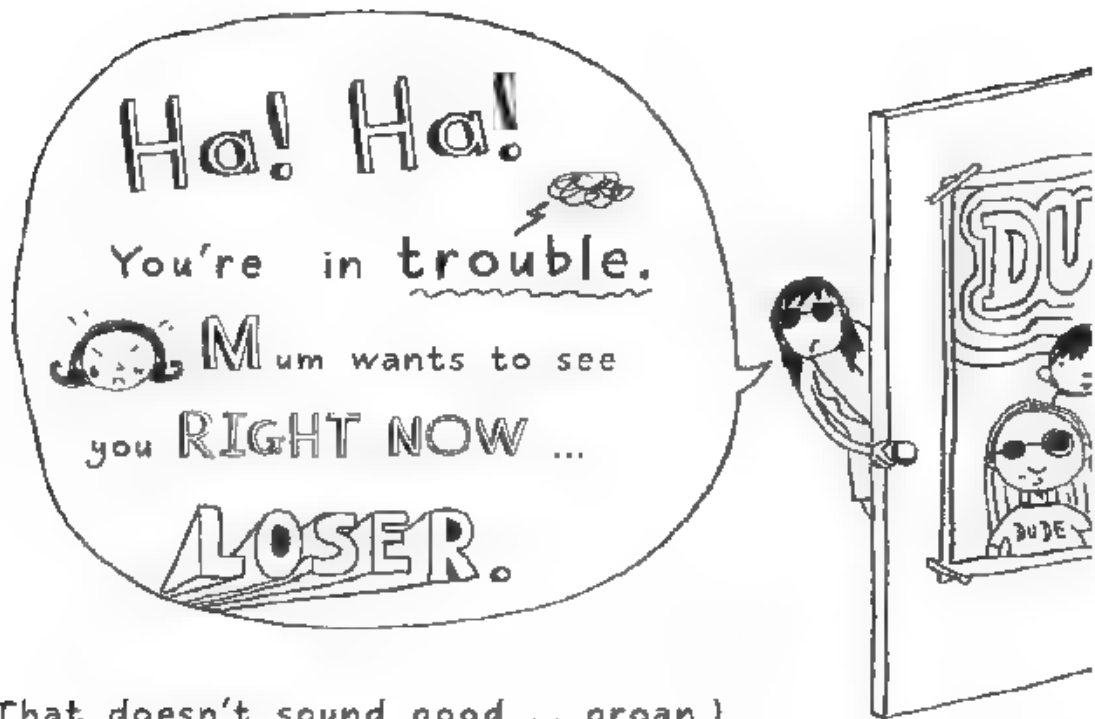
But if that doesn't work, I give him a pair of Della's sunglasses  to chew on.  It keeps him happy  for HOURS.

Right now I can hear Delia  shuffling around outside my bedroom (which usually means trouble). 

So I *LEAN* on my door to stop her from barging in.

Somenow she <sup>still</sup> manages to stick her **BIG** head around the door.

She says...



I wish I could shut Delia up with a doggy treat  
... how good would that be?



When I see Mum, she's holding a letter from school. I'm trying really hard to remember



**ANYTHING** I've done that might have got me into trouble.

**No** ... can't think of anything.

Nothing at all.



(I am innocent.)



But by the way Mum is looking at me, in that

What have you got to say for yourself?



kind of way, I must have forgotten something. She gives me the letter to read.



OK, just remembered.

**To Mr and Mrs Gates**  
**RE: Tom Gates Dog Attack**

Dear Mr and Mrs Gates,

I do hope that Tom has recovered from the vicious dog that attacked him on the last day of term as he walked to school.

What luck that he had his schoolbook to defend himself with.

I'm SO glad it was only his homework that was chewed and not Tom. Enclosed is ANOTHER copy of the HOMEWORK - to review a film book, TV show - for Tom to complete again during his holiday

Let's hope there are no other ANGRY beasts ready to pounce in the future!

Many thanks for your help.

Kind regards

**Mr Fullerman**  
Class 5F Form Tutor

I am trying to explain to Mum what happened to me by reenacting the whole scene in slow motion.



(There was no choice ... it was me or the homework.)

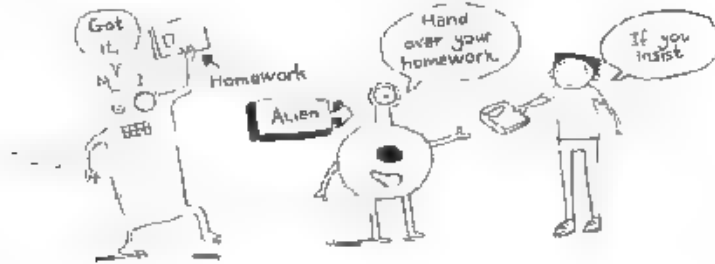
But she's **not** impressed. I think she suspects I might have made up the dog attack (I did).

Instead I have to agree to:

1. Do my review homework. (AGAIN.)
2. Not use vicious dogs as an excuse for lack of homework (or any other



kind of creature, for that matter).



3. Tidy my room. (Mum added that one.)

Still, at  
least I have



to do the  
review homework in.

Though I will probably leave it until the last possible moment, like the night before school. That works for me.

"NOW? 

What do you mean I have to do my homework  
right now? I've still got

TWO WHOLE WEEKS!" 

Mum says, "There's no time like the present."

Then she adds, "No sleepover at Derek's until  
you've done your homework."

Which is a



I have to think of something to  
review quickly. Mmmmmmmmm.

Think ...  think ... think ... think ...  
think...

If I don't think of something ~~FAST~~ **FAST**  
Mum will keep me in the house

**FOR EVER** . Then just to add to the

**PRESSURE**, Derek phones up to  
find out what time I'm coming over for the  
sleepover and band practice.



I hear Mum saying,

That all depends on how  
long it takes Tom to do  
his review homework,  
**Derek.**



(That's ALL I need.) ☹️

Mum thinks I should go to my room to ...

"sit quietly and 'concentrate' on getting it done".

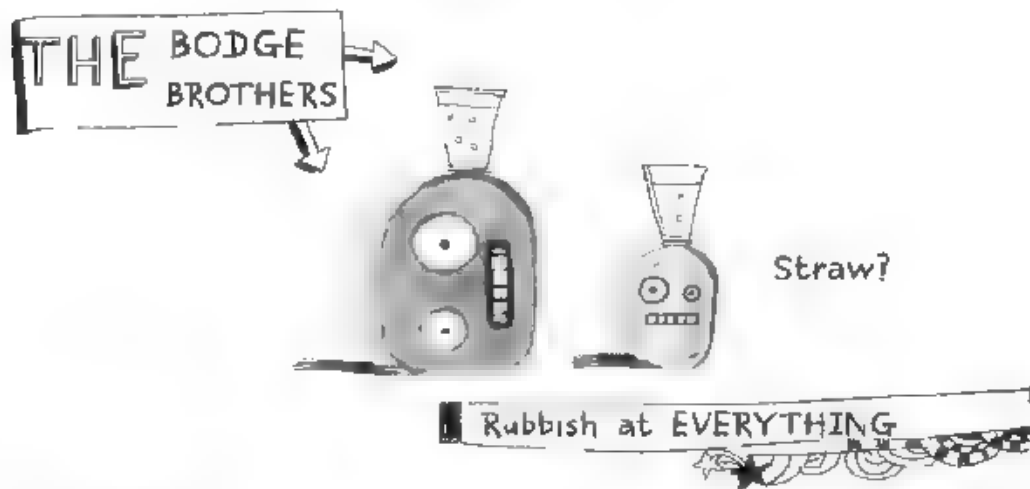
(It's not working.)



So I do some drawing instead.

It's a lot more fun inventing my own characters...

Ha Ha!



The ONLY thing I can think of that I could review is the **DUDE 3** concert that Dad took me to. It's actually a BRILLIANT idea because **DUDE 3** are amazing.

(Even Mr Fullerman is a fan.)

Suddenly my review will be no problem at all.  
Derek's house ... here I come.

## REVIEW HOMEWORK

By Tom Gates.

I went to see the **DUDE 3** concert.

They are the



and anyone who doesn't think so is  
a total **IDIOT**.

The End

I run downstairs and show it quickly to Mum.

There ... all done.



I am busy packing a few essentials for Derek's house when this time Dad comes up to see me.



Apparently Mum doesn't think I am taking my 'review' homework "seriously". Dad says I have to do it again "PROPERLY".

Which is a bit **HARSH**. (OK, I admit my review was <sup>←→</sup>short, <sup>D</sup>but true.)




Dad suddenly holds up a packet of wafers.

"For the sleepover, when you've done your homework again, OK?"



SUDDENLY I am VERY  
INSPIRED.

In fact I have a TOTAL    
to get my homework done in double-quick time  
(I am a 'genius'). 

I run d  stairs and grab   
the first book from the shelf that  
looks thick (but not TOO thick). Mum  
sees that I am holding a BOOK and   
assumes that:

 +  =  SERIOUS ATTEMPT  
AT HOMEWORK.  
TOM

(She looks pleased with me.)

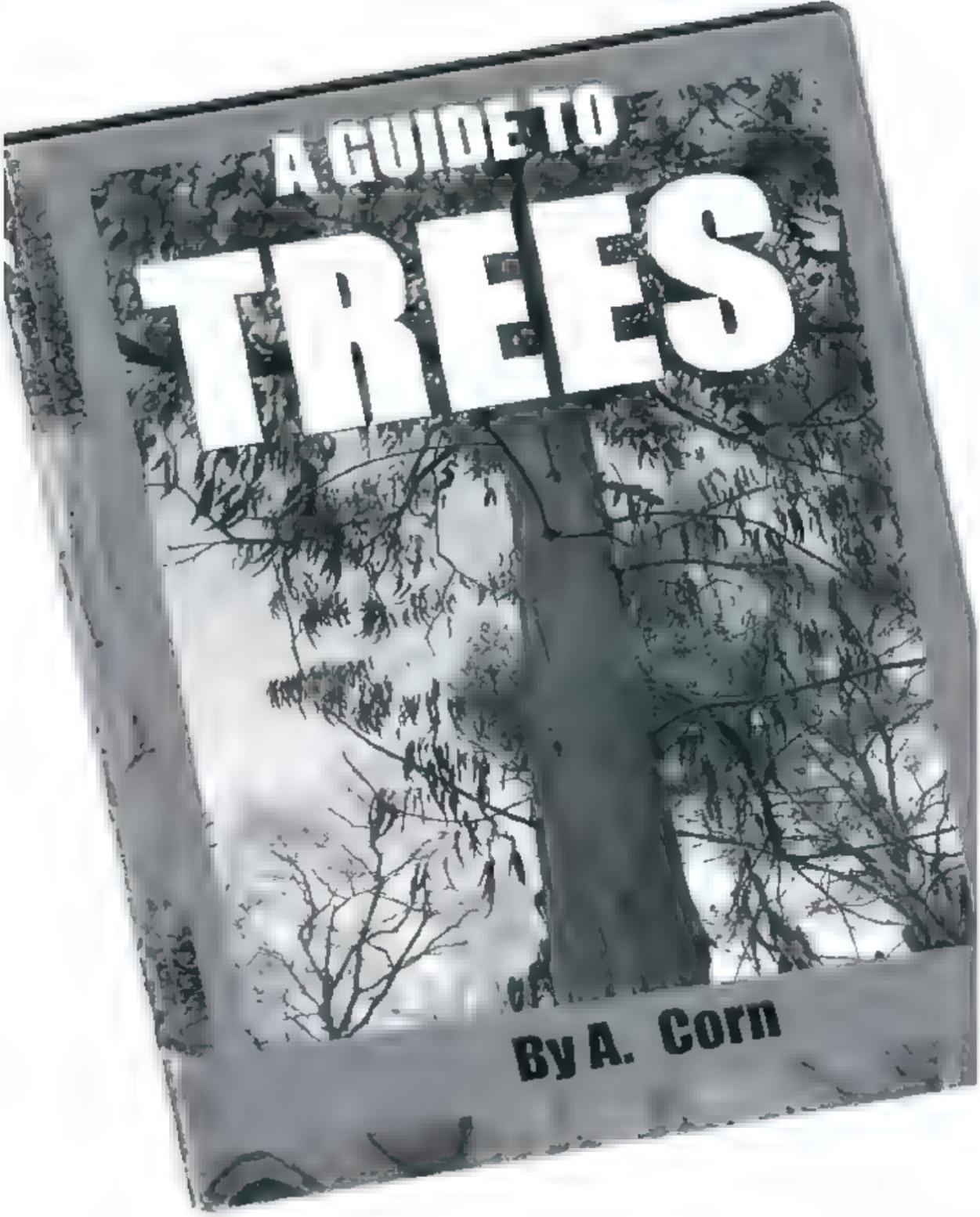
SIGH...  


The book I've got is about ...  
let me see ... ☹ ☹

TREES!

Never mind, that will have to do. I can see  
there's a lot of good stuff written on  
the back of this book (and inside!) that  
will help make my REVIEW seem very  
impressive indeed.

Here goes.



**A GUIDE TO**  
**TREES**

**By A. Corn**

Homework FINISHED.

YEAH!




I tell Mum and Dad and they want me to  
**READ** it to them.

"What, **NOW?**" 

"Yes, Tom, now. We'd love to hear it."

(Which actually means - just checking you've  
really done it this time.)

Delia is lurking in the kitchen trying to listen. So I shut the kitchen door (in her face), then read it as  quickly as I can.



**LUCKILY**, my homework is  
**EXCELLENT** (if I do say so myself).

Mum and Dad are pleased 😊 and slightly surprised I've managed to write **such** a good review **SO** quickly. I let them see it by **WAFING** it under their noses ... super fast.



(Must remember to hide the book on trees too.)

Mum and Dad say well done for being

so




I say, "It's all down to

**GOOD PARENTING.**"

(Which is something I've heard my teachers say.)

Then I add, "I'm actually VERY interested  
in TREES." (I'm not.)

This goes down really well  and  
stops Mum and Dad from asking me any more  
difficult questions.

**GREAT!**

(I should say nice stuff like that more often.)

They are both in a good mood 😊 now so I suggest that another sign of

## GOOD PARENTING

would be to reward my hard work and  
**EFFORT** with some

# EXTRA



Which doesn't go down quite so well...



(Worth a try, though.)




Derek is happy


Yeah!



I've brought →  SNACKS.

But stupidly, ☹️ I've forgotten to bring my

guitar  for band practice. And far more importantly, I've left

my special teddy  at home. (I don't tell Derek because we agreed that Special Teddies were probably a bit **TOO** babyish now we're in a band.)



Luckily Derek's house is only next door to mine. So I nip back home to get them both.

Delia  is sitting in the front garden with her "dodgy" boyfriend

Ed (or Ted or whatever his

name is). He says,



All right, Tom?

(Which is nice and takes me by surprise.) Then Delia shouts,

Get lost ... idiot.



(Which is not a surprise at all.)


That's when I notice Ed and Delia are actually



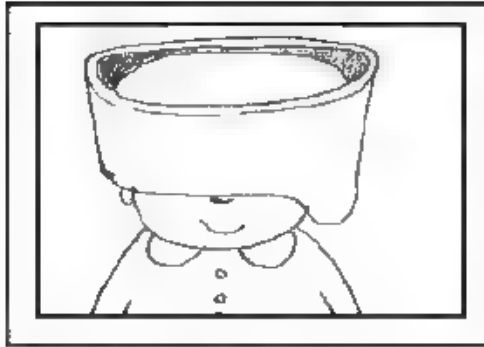
HOLDING hands.

It's **HORRIBLE.**

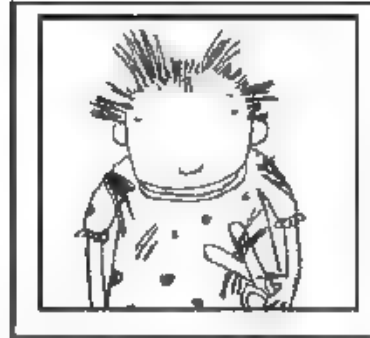
I feel a bit sick  and have to run into the house quickly. 

I grab my guitar, teddy   
**AND** a selection of embarrassing photos of Delia that I've been saving for a VERY special occasion.

I think this might be the **SPECIAL** occasion I've been waiting for.



Delia with a potty on her head.



Delia after cutting her own hair with play scissors.



Delia after I pushed her into the mud (my personal favourite).





Delia with scary smile.



Delia with more bad hair and spots.

Derek can't stop laughing at Delia's **OLD** photos.

 Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

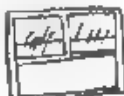
We both agree that  this funny need to be shared with **OTHER** people.

Other people like

Delia's boyfriend **ED**.




(I have a **VERY** good plan.) 

We cleverly attach all the photos (plus a few extra drawings) to Derek's fishing line. Then we dangle them out of the  just behind Delia's head.



huh?

Our plan seems to be working. Ed is laughing a lot. Unlike Delia, who is wondering  what he's laughing at.

Luckily we manage to pull up the photos before Delia works out what's going on. At least they're not holding hands any more.

**SUCCESS!**

(It's a good start to the sleepover.)








next. Mr Fingle   
(Derek's dad)



is hovering outside the garage where we practise. Derek says we can't start until his dad is **OUT** of the way completely.

This is because he likes to give us on music, which Derek finds very embarrassing. Mind you, my dad is



**EXACTLY** the same. (What is it with dads and music? ). Mr Fingle keeps his  collection and  record player in the garage.

All his records are in alphabetical order and  
Derek says he spends **HOURS** cleaning  
them

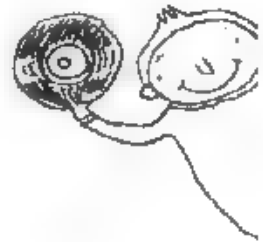


and looking at the covers.



(How sad is that?)

Anytime we go to practise, Mr  
Fngle will suddenly appear and say  
things like,



That's not music,  
♪ THIS is music!

or

In MY day, music  
sounded like REAL  
music ... blah blah blah.



Derek warns me...

"If my dad EVER says to you,  
'Have you heard of this band, Tom?'

just say

YES.



What happens if  
I say NO?

I ask.

"You'll be forced to listen to CRACKLY  
OLD records FOR 'EVER'. So trust me.

Just say

YES

and pretend you know all  
about the band already."



OK,

I agree.



We wait until Mr Fingle is safely out of the way before sneaking in and getting started.

If we are **EVER** going to become like **DUDE3 (\*BEST\*)** band in the world)

we need to learn a few more songs. Which won't be easy because right now the **ONLY** song we can play all the way through (just about) is

**DELIA'S A WEIRDO**

Which goes like this...



# Delia's a Weirdo





Who's that weirdo over there?  
Dressed in **black**  
With greasy hair  
You can't trust her  
She's not nice  
She's got no heart   
Just a block of ice



## CHORUS

Delia  
She's a **WEIRDO**  
Delia  
She's a **GEEK**  
Delia  
She's a **WEIRDO**  
Delia  
She's a **FREAK**

Delia's a grumpy moo  
Don't let her  
Stand next to you  
Big black glasses  
Hide her eyes   
She really smells   
And that's no lie



## CHORUS



Delia enjoying  
the song.

Derek plays me a song called



(It's an oldie his dad taught him.)

It's **ACE!** But I think we might need  
another band member to play it properly.

I don't think Derek can keep playing 'drums' and  
keyboard ...



... at the same time.

Luckily, Derek agrees.



We are chatting about how to find a new band member when his dad suddenly appears.



NEW BAND MEMBER?  
I'm available!



Derek says, "We're busy, Dad," but Mr Fingle doesn't take the hint.

"What are you playing, lads?"



I say. Derek gives me a "what did you say **THAT** for?"

look. 

"'Wild Thing'. Good choice, boys. Didn't I teach you that, Derek?"

Derek's not listening.  
He is trying to get his  
dad to leave. It's not working.



“Do you know who played the original version of ‘Wild Thing’?” Mr Fingle asks.



(In my head   I’m thinking about what Derek told me.)

 So I say... “YES.”

Then Mr Fingle says, 

“Really? Did you know the The Wild Ones recorded it in 1965, but it’s **The Troggs’** version that everyone remembers.”

Now it gets tricky.



Mr Fingle then asks me,

“Have you heard of **The Troggs**, Tom?”

And for a split second I forget what I’m supposed to say (because I’ve said **YES** already, and I don’t want to be rude). I hear myself saying,

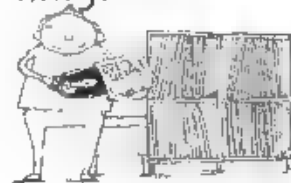


**NO**, Mr Fingle, I haven’t heard of **The Troggs**.

And that’s it ... he’s **offf!**

Looking through his record collection to play us the original version of Wild Thing.

Derek rolls his eyes and says we might as well leave him to it.

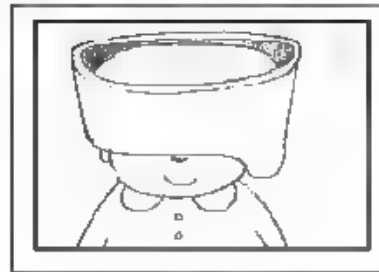


"He won't even notice we're gone," Derek says.



He's right.

Derek and I spend the rest of the evening  
chit-chatting about  
Delia's dodgy photos →  
(VERY funny).



And how BRILLIANT it was  
sneaking back to my house and  
sticking even MORE photos around  
when Delia wasn't looking!






Delia's photos + me and Derek = Genius






Mrs Worthington's moustache gets a mention too.




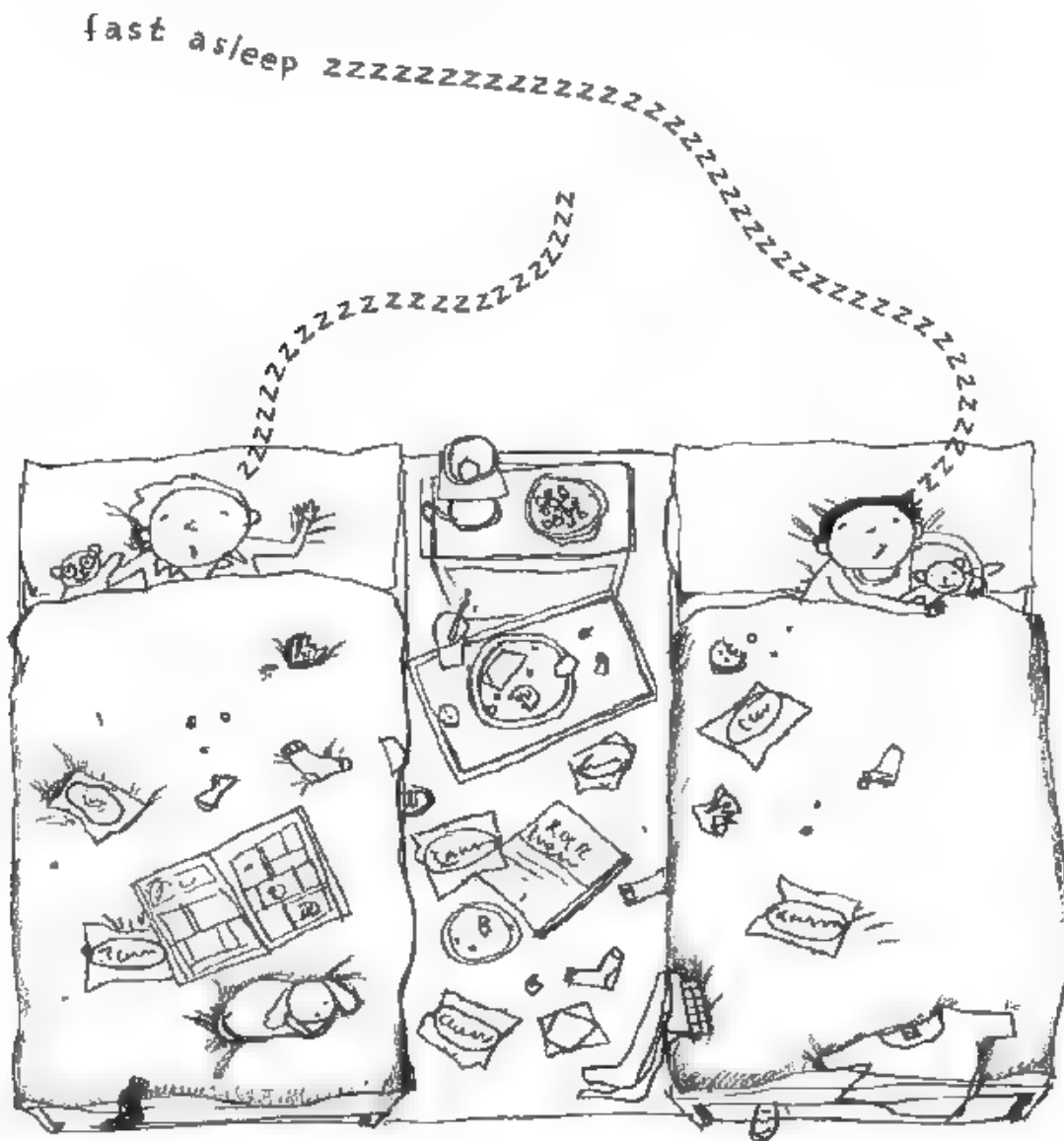
\* \*  
It's getting late and I'm really tired,   
but I don't want to be the first one to go  
to sleep  because I'm waiting for the  
right moment to bring out my  teddy.



Then Derek says that  
"JUST FOR TONIGHT" he's going to use  
his   teddy as a 

because it helps him sleep. 

And I say, "That's SUCH a good idea!" And  
take my teddy  out too.





So far I'm having a very  
good holiday and **NOT** missing school  
at all. I'm keeping busy by doing  
all kinds of **GOOD STUFF**

like:

☺ Finding **NEW** places to hide

Delia's sunglasses.



☺ Sleepovers at Derek's.

☺ Listening to **DUDE 3** and trying  
out new **ROCK STAR** poses.



☺ More drawing and doodling.

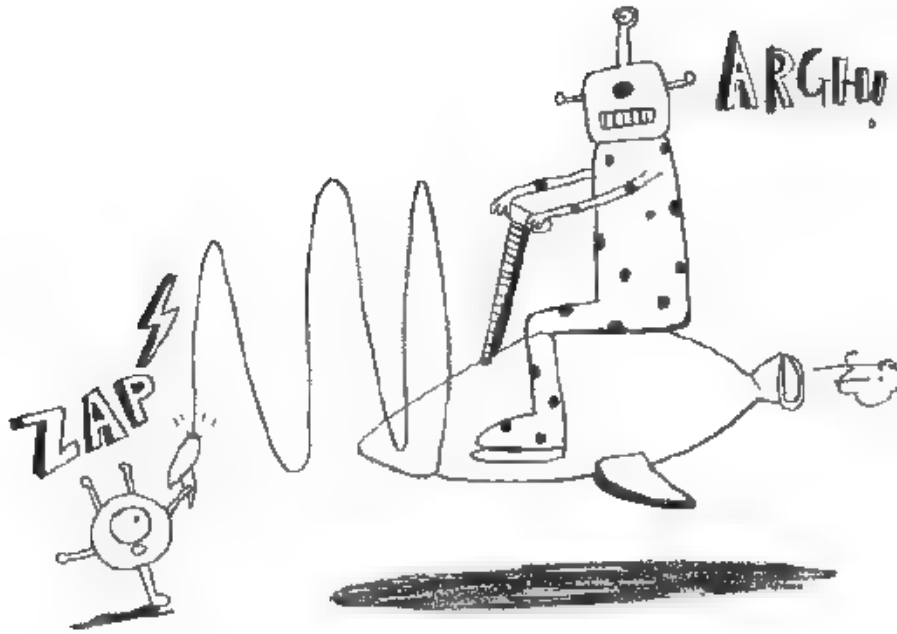
This is a good game...



Do a scribble



then see what you can turn it into.

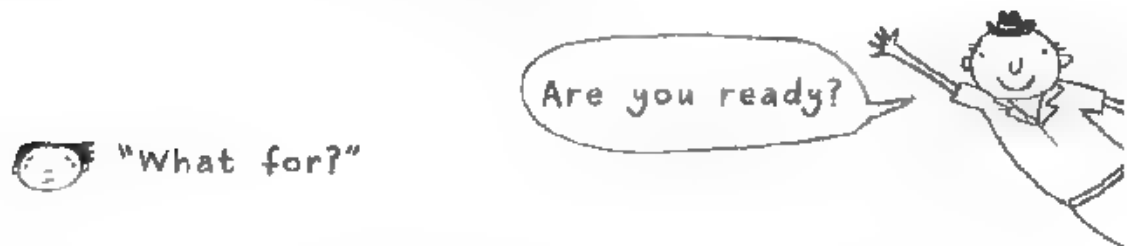


Like  this ... ALIENS!

This game is particularly good to play in BORING ☹ ☹ lessons, as it looks like you are **VERY** busy.

 ← (mmm? any ideas?)

I am perfectly happy and have 😊  
**LOADS** of ideas for more drawings when  
Dad comes in and interrupts.



"Remember? You're staying at your cousins'  
for the afternoon."



"Because your mum and I are both working.  
It's just for a few hours."



"The Fingles are out  
shopping today."



"The **FOSSILS?**" 

"You mean Granny and Granddad?  
They're out and about too."

"I'll stay here with Delia." 



"You must be desperate, Tom. She's going out.  
Sorry, you have to go to your cousins'. Just  
try not to do anything silly ... like last time."





(The Fossils... "out and about.")

**GROAN** ... looks like I don't have much choice. Then Dad adds,

"Oh, and PLEASE DO NOT mention my birthday to  Uncle Kevin or Aunty Alice.  I don't want

**any** fuss this year."




"OK."




"And don't mention how many parking tickets I have ... Uncle Kevin doesn't need to know."

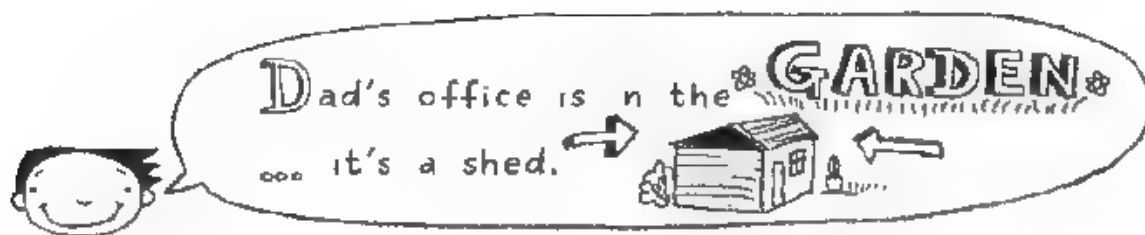
"OK."

There seem to be a **LOT** of things I'm not allowed to mention to Uncle Kevin and Auntie Alice. I sometimes don't remember them all.



Last time I was there for a visit, Uncle Kevin  kept asking Dad about his job. And I heard Dad say...

"**W**ell, I've just moved to a fantastic  office that is much closer to home  . So I do a lot less travelling and it's far more suitable for my work." So I said...









Which is TRUE!

But Dad gave me one of those

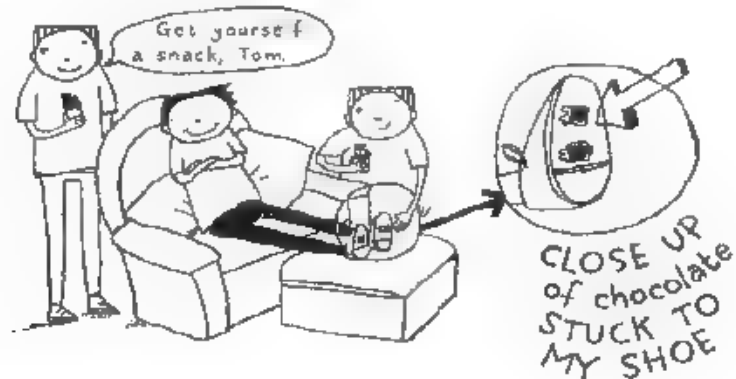
"what did you have to say  
that for?" stares.



I definitely don't mention the tin  
of biscuits  he keeps in the shed because  
I know that's a secret.

 Occasionally my cousins  
play tricks on me.    

Some tricks are funnier than others.  
This one was annoying.



It was **REALLY** embarrassing when  
Aunty Alice followed  
the chocolate



(One reason I don't want to go to the  
cousins'.)

So I am (very slowly) getting ready to go,  
when Delia comes up to me and says...



"If you're going to the cousins',  
will you do me a favour?"

"What?"



"DON'T COME BACK ... EVER."

~~~~~  
**SUDDENLY** I think of some  
**GOOD** reasons to go after all.)

1. Delia won't be there to annoy me. 😊

2. They keep **LOTS** of  
cakes and biscuits  
in the house.



3. There's **MASSIVE**



all over the house.

4. And EXTRA  
**LARGE**



How bad can it be? 😊

On the drive over, Dad is trying to remember if he has money for the parking meter.



I can tell he's a bit grumpy today.

He says,

"Don't get chocolate stuck under your shoes again..."



(That was the cousins' fault!)

"AND don't break anything ⚡ that's expensive."



"



"Everything in their house is expensive, Uncle Kevin said so."



"Did he? Well just because something is **EXPENSIVE**, Tom," Dad says as we drive up to Uncle Kevin's **BIG** house, "doesn't mean it's better, or any more ... well, **TASTEFUL**."



Dad is very pleased Uncle Kevin has already gone. "I can park in his space for free," he says.

Aunty Alice opens the door and tells us,

"You've just missed your Uncle Kevin!"



And Dad says,

"**W**hat a SHAME! We did try to get here earlier."

(We didn't.)

Then Dad thanks Aunty Alice for having me and promises not to be **too** long.



I go and find the cousins, who are busy eating snacks



(which is a good start).



But they don't seem keen on sharing their snacks with me.



Instead we go to the food cupboard (which is **STUFFED** full of treats). The cousins tell me to help myself.

"You're a guest, take those biscuits ... they're nice."



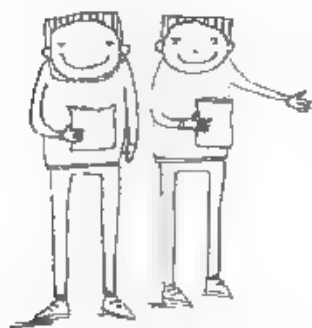
**BRILLIANT!**

(It would be rude not to.)

I manage to ➡ **CRAM** ⬅ **LOTS**  
into my pockets and carry the rest in  
a **BIG** pile.



Which is so high I can't see ○ ○ where  
I'm going. The cousins help out by shouting  
directions.



"Forward."

"Forward."

"Keep going..."

Keep going." "KEEP GOING ...  
WHOOPS!"

I walk

BANG

SMACK into Aunty Alice.



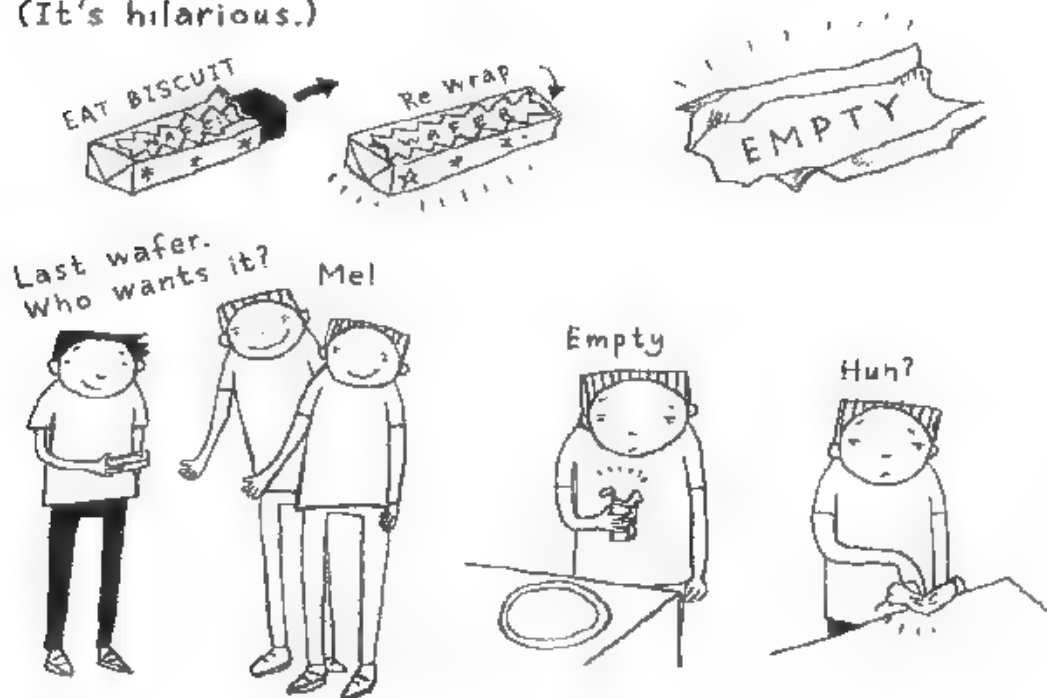
Who suggests I  
put a few snacks back.  
(I think the cousins have

tricked me.) I'm allowed to keep the caramel  
wafers and a drink. Which is good news  
because at least I get to do the "empty biscuit  
wrapper" joke on the cousins...

Which they fall for

**EVERY TIME.**

(It's hilarious.)



When the cousins have had enough of my little  
biscuit joke, I suggest we watch TV instead.

"GOOD IDEA," they say. 😊

"Let's watch something FUNNY?"

I add. But the cousins want to watch a

SCARY film. (Which is not my idea

of fun at ALL.)

I blame →  Delia. She let me watch 

THE HOUSE WITH THE DEADLY EYES

when I was little. She thought it was funny making me JUMP (it wasn't).



But I don't tell the cousins that I  
**REALLY** don't like **SCARY** films.

Instead I say...

"I'll watch **ANYTHING.**"

They choose...



(Mmm, doesn't look too bad?)

OK, I'm wrong.



The film turns out to be the most

**SUPER SCARY**

film I have EVER seen. ○ ○ I have to hide  
behind a cushion for most of it. Unlike the  
cousins, who can't stop LAUGHING! They  
think it's funny (it's not).



I can't wait until it's over.

Aunty Alice pops in. She says,



You all seem to be enjoying yourselves!

"Loads," I say.

When it's finished, the cousins suggest we watch ANOTHER film. (Groan.)

"A REALLY **SCARY** film  
this time."

(What do they mean, a REALLY  
SCARY one?)



Great, I'll just have to keep my eyes  
SHUT ➡ ⬅ the ENTIRE time now.

They put on:

# BLOODSUCKER BEETLES VS GIANT ALIENS



So I am hiding behind a cushion again.

It's not helping much.



I can still hear the scary stuff  
through the cushion.



Luckily Dad turns up early to pick me up.

PHEW!

I AM SAVED.



Hooray  
HOORAY!

In front of the cousins, though, I pretend to  
be **VERY** sad that I won't get to see the  
rest of the film. SHAME.



"Maybe next time you're round," the cousins  
say to me. (I hope not.)

**A**unty Alice tells Dad I've been  
"no trouble at all".



For some reason Dad asks, "**N**o chocolate  
stains on the carpet or antiques broken, then?"

(Thanks for reminding everyone, Dad.)



"Nothing damaged. But speaking of old  
antiques ... isn't it your birthday soon, Frank?"

And I hear Dad say, "My birthday's not for

**AGES** ". Which isn't true at **ALL**.

So I mention that Dad's birthday is actually  
**NEXT WEEK**. How could anyone  
forget their own birthday?

Aunty Alice **INSISTS** that we should  
all go out and celebrate.

"Just like last year. It will be

**FUN!**"



(Dad's birthday present last year.)



Dad doesn't seem keen on the idea.

I can tell he's trying very hard to think of  
reasons not to go when Uncle Kevin bursts in  
through the door.



“Frank! I hope you paid for parking. There’s a traffic warden looking at your car.”

From the way Dad  
out of the door, I’m  
guessing he didn’t  
buy a ticket.



We all follow him outside.



Dad is **REALLY CROSS**

and shouting rude things.  
Uncle Kevin is shaking  
his head in a  
disapproving way.

So I tell Uncle Kevin that HE'D  
be CROSS too if he had TEN



parking tickets like Dad.



Now Dad's cross with ME for saying how  
many tickets he's got.

Like it's MY FAULT!

Dad's in a REALLY bad mood all the way home.  
But that's NOTHING compared with how cross  
MUM is when she finds out that:



1. Dad got **ANOTHER** parking ticket  (number e even).

2. We have to go to dinner with the cousins for Dad's birthday.

3. I watched Vampire Swamp Monsters From Hell (well, sort of).



I don't think I'll be going back to the cousins' again for a while, which means I won't be able to watch the rest of




BLOODSUCKER BEETLES vs GIANT ALIENS.

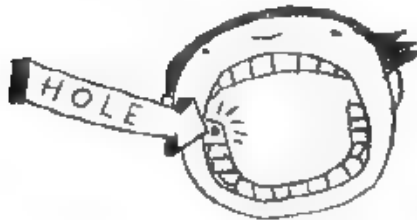
**(RESULT!)**



During the night I  
wake up ○ ○ with a


HORRIBLE **PAIN**

in my  tooth. I sneak to the  
bathroom to take a proper look.



It's not good.

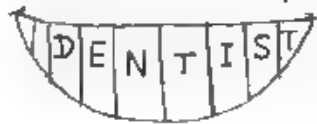
I can see a **BIG**  
**black** hole in it ...  
oh no  
... groan.

I  brush my teeth in the hope ☺ that the  
hole will suddenly close up and go away.

It doesn't. 

It just **HURTS** even more.

Which means I'll probably HAVE to go to the

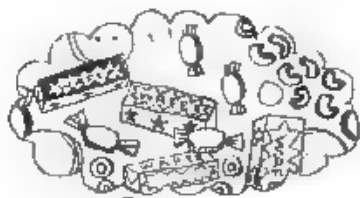


now.

GROAN.



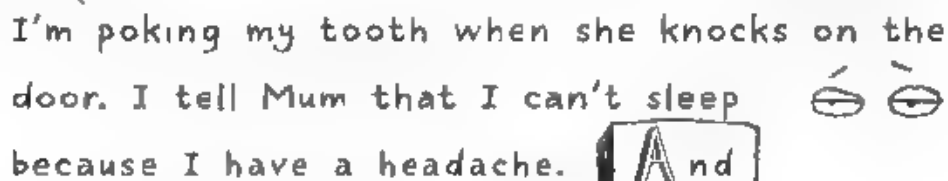
If Mum finds out I have a toothache she won't let me have ANY sweets or snacks for a while. And she DEFINITELY won't let me take treats over to DEREK'S house.



My treats



Mum's treats



And

# SCARY



Mum gives me some medicine  
(which brilliantly stops my tooth

I go back to bed and try to get some sleep.





But in the morning my toothache

is BACK.



Still Here

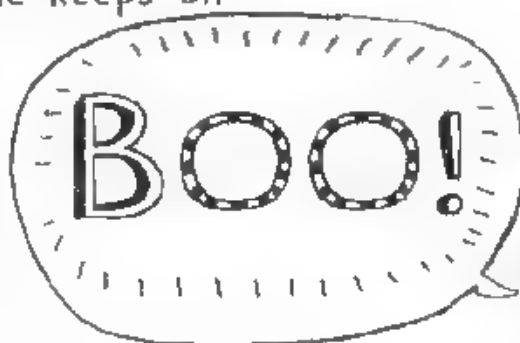
And if that's not bad enough ...

... the first thing DELIA says to me is,



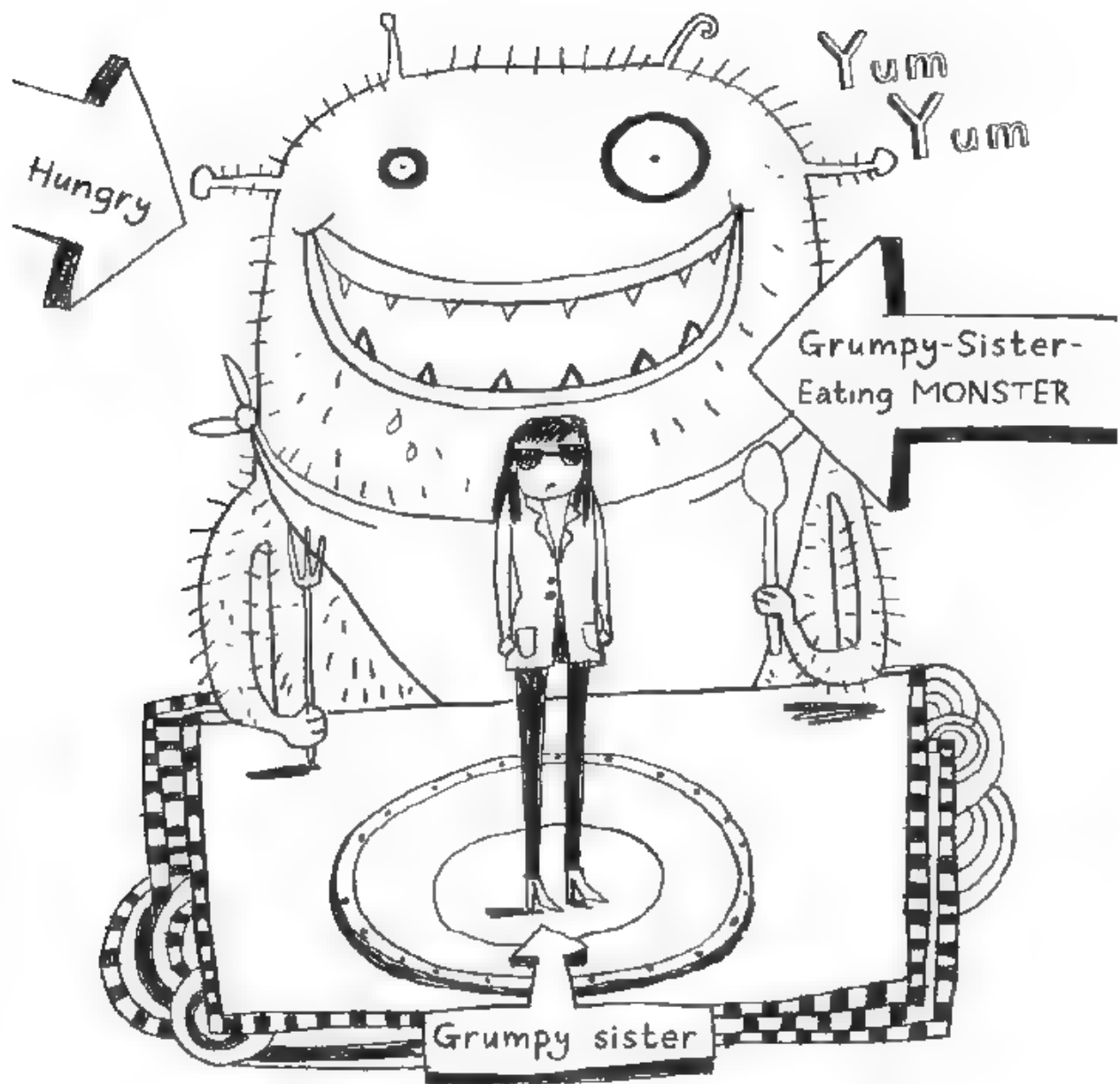
Was little Tommy a bit scaredy  
waredy of the scawwy film?


GREAT ... Mum must have told her I  
woke up in the night. On top of calling  
me a scaredy cat, she keeps on  
sneaking up behind  
me and saying



which is getting on  
my nerves.

So I do this drawing to cheer me up.



I'm eating breakfast on the non-painful side of my mouth (and trying not to dribble) when Derek comes round and asks if I want to go swimming. 

(Which might take my mind off this toothache. )

So I say **yes** and hope for the best. At least Delia won't be there to annoy me.

Question: What's more irritating - Delia  or toothache?

Answer: Delia - because eventually toothache goes away.




I've been groaning



a bit due to my tooth

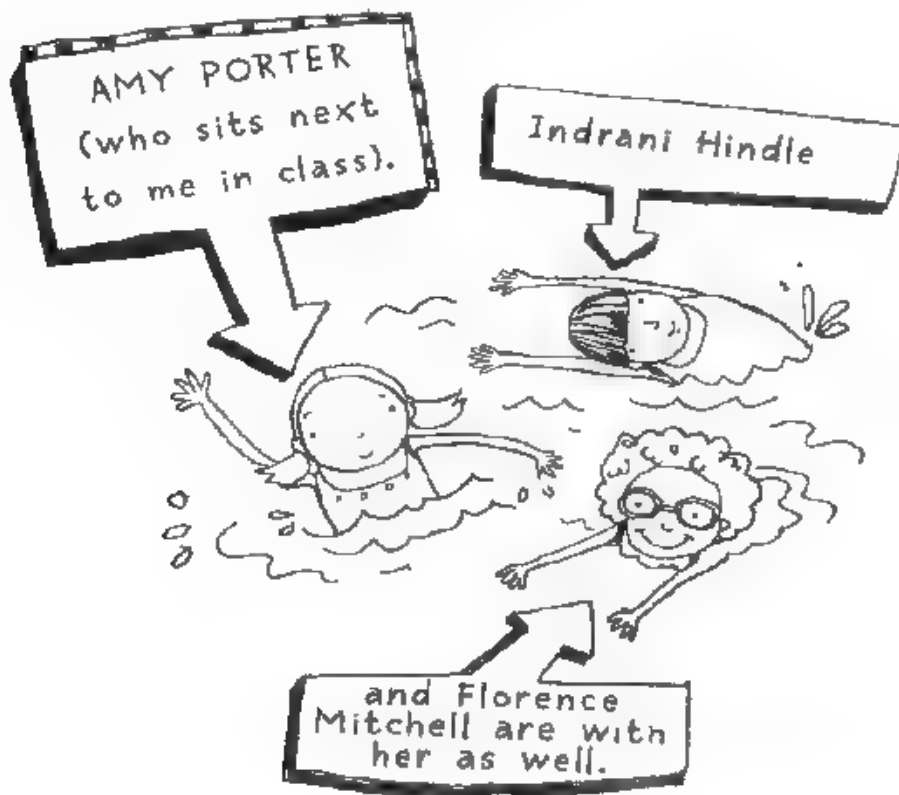
→ **THROBBING**,, Derek asks me



if I'm OK.  I don't mention my toothache because I'm hoping the water will SOOTHE my face and make it go away completely.

**AND** Derek has TREATS for after swimming that he said he'd share with me. Instead I tell him that my groaning is due to Delia SHOVING me and injuring my arm. Which is true ... she did. Derek is very glad 😊 he doesn't have a sister like me.





When we get to the pool, it's pretty busy already. I spot quite a few kids from our school swimming, including ...



Amy is the smartest girl in the school, which is excellent for me as I get to take the occasional sneaky peak   at her work.



The grls are too busy chatting and swimming and don't see us come in.

Derek and I decide to play it cool and only say  to them if they say hello to  first.



(Good plan.)

So we go off to get changed and I'm

Rummaging around in my bag

looking for my   swimming trunks.

I can't find them ANYWHERE.



I have a **HORRIBLE** feeling I've left them at home. (I have.)

Derek makes two suggestions:

1. I should swim in my **PANTS**.  
(That's not going to happen.)

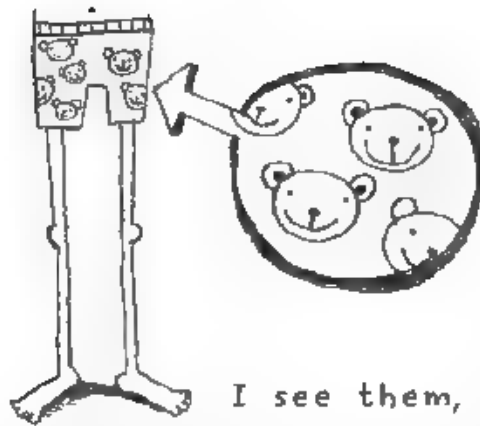




2. He has a very **OLD** pair of trunks in his bag I can borrow.

I say, "**GREAT**." At least I'll be able to swim now.


Derek passes them to me under the changing room door.

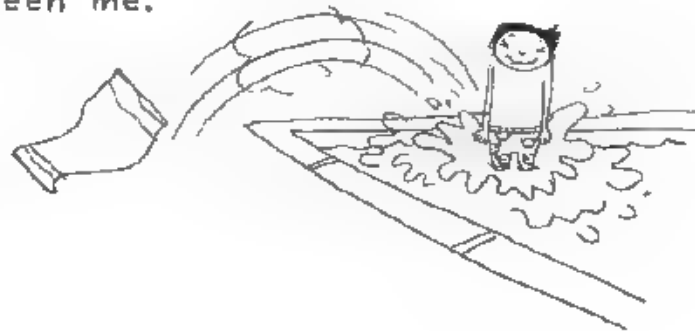




When I see them,  I'm wondering **exactly** how old these trunks really are? The teddy bear  pattern makes me think Derek was probably about **FOUR** when he last wore them.



They are a bit short  so I have to keep my towel round me until the very **LAST** minute. Then I quickly jump in the pool and hope no one has seen me.



Derek and I swim  
up and down and do  
some diving, which is fun. 😊



(It makes me forget about my toothache  
🦷 ... well, almost.)

Amy and her friends still haven't seen us  
yet, but Norman Watson has. ☹️





He's waving like  
from the other

**CRAZY**

side of the pool. Norman's  
brought his little brother with  
him, who looks just like him only

smaller. They come and join us, which is good  
because **now** we can all play **SHARK**  
together.

Derek →  is the  SHARK first.

He manages to swim and catch me. Now it's

 turn to be the  SHARK.   I spot

Norman (who's not great at hiding) and quickly

swim to catch him. Now  Norman is the

 SHARK. I've never seen Norman swim

before... So it's a bit of a surprise when he starts to

 **SPLASH!**

He's not moving much, just ...



SPLASHING!



AND

SPLASHING!



AND

SPLASHING!



His arms and legs are thrashing around

making **MASSIVE**


waves in the pool. The splash is SO huge the lifeguard looks over and blows her whistle.



We're all told to:



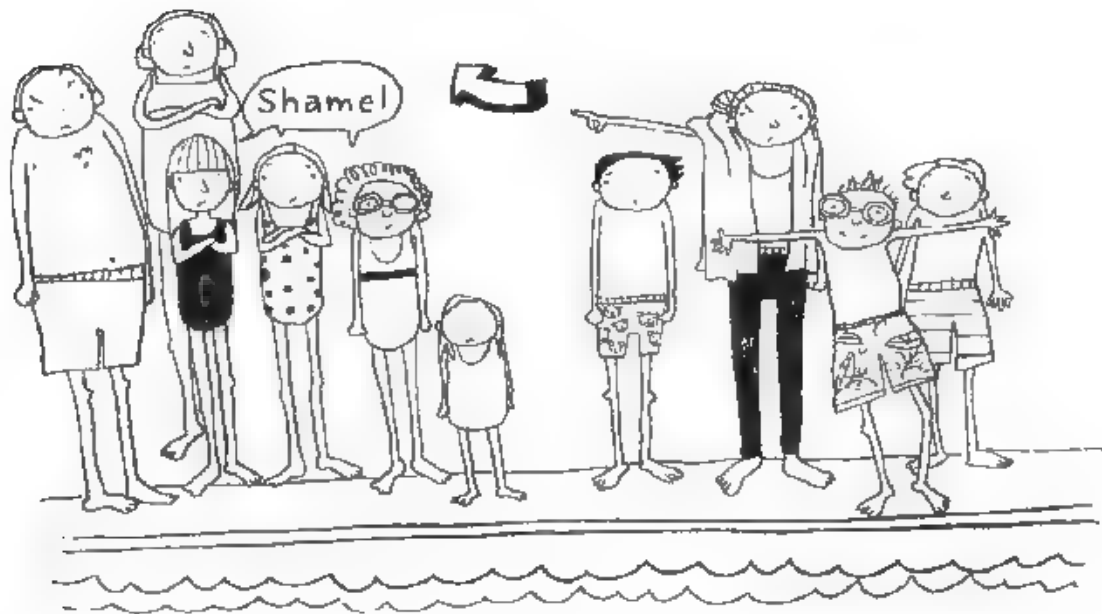
**GET OUT OF  
THE WATER!**

The lifeguard dives in and "rescues" Norman (who's *not* drowning, just swimming  **VERY** badly).

Everybody is standing at the side of the pool watching (including Amy, Florence and Indrani).

While Norman is explaining to the lifeguard about his "unusual swimming style", the lifeguard tells us,

"No more **crazy** splashing or you'll have to get OUT!"



It's **VERY** embarrassing.

Then f **THAT'S** not bad enough, Amy  
comes over and says to me,

"Nice teddy swimming trunks, Tom."



(I'd forgotten all about my teddy-bear  
swimming trunks ... groan. )

**A**nd I can hear Florence and Indrani laughing.

*I jump back in the pool quickly to hide.*

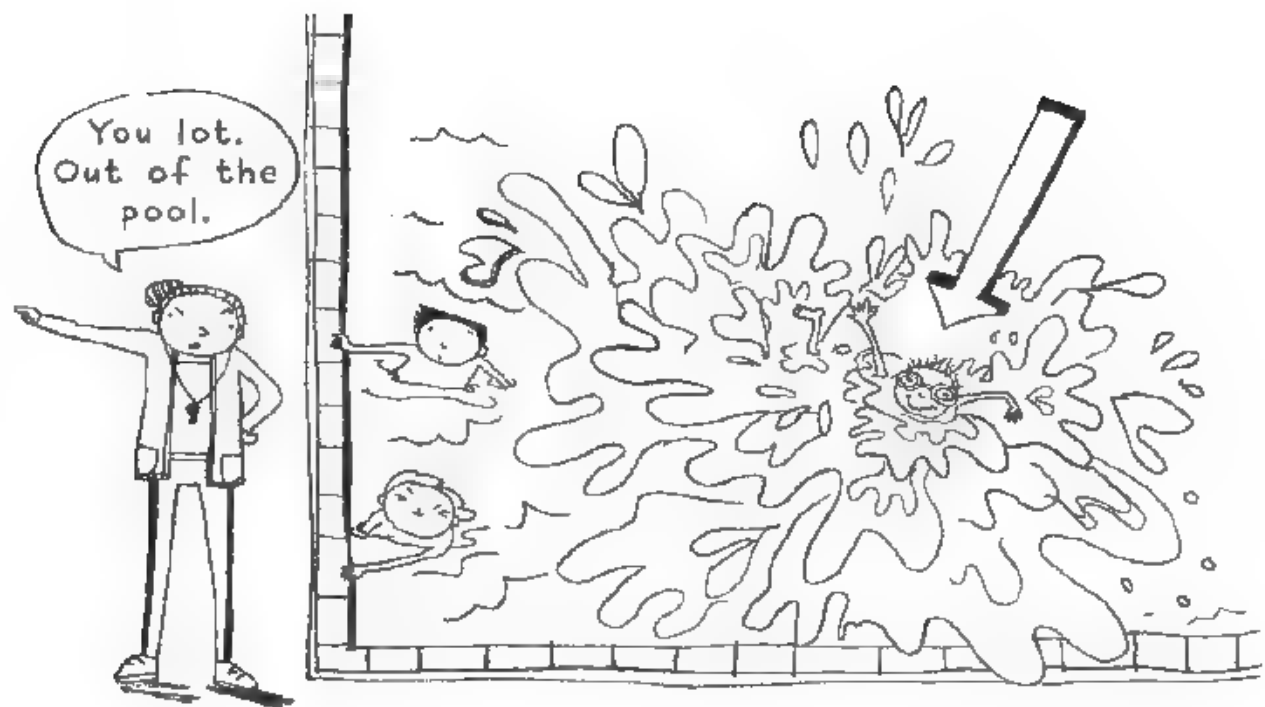


Norman's little brother **A**lfie jumps in too  
and wants to challenge me to a race.

He's only small,  I don't want to hurt his  
feelings ...

so I give him a head start.




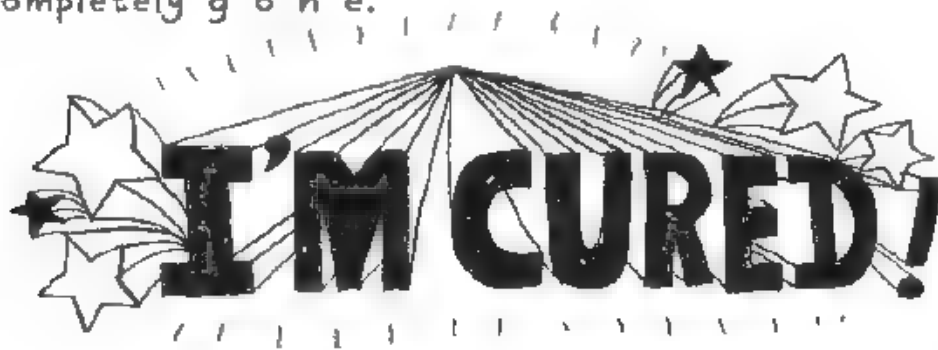


How was I supposed to know Alfie's  
swimming "style" was even

**WORSE** than Norman's?

(The lifeguard has seen enough splashing  
for one day.)

It was a short swim, but on the way home I realize that my toothache  has completely gone.

 **I'M CURED!**

I won't have to go to the dentist after all now.

BRILLIANT!

WATER  +  =  

I celebrate by taking the very small sweet that Derek offers me.



   
(Which is a mistake.)



Bad news is ... my



tooth is still throbbing quite badly.

I can't believe the holiday has gone **SO**

~~FAST~~ *FAST* and I'm back at school tomorrow.



If I tell Mum about my tooth, I could probably get the day off school. But that would mean having to:



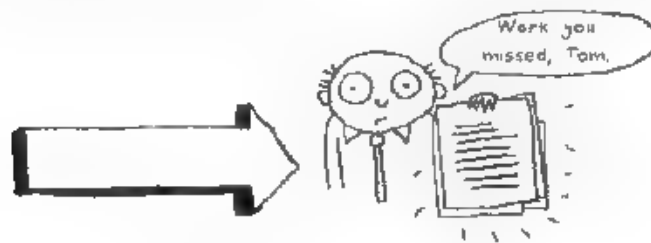
1. Go to the **DENTIST**.

2. Get stuff done to my tooth.

3. Not eat TREATS or any sweet stuff for a very long time.



4. Catch up on the schoolwork I missed.



Instead I try to forget all about my toothache by doing some drawing.





...I'm STILL thinking

about my  
TOOTHACHE.



(Groan.)

I know, I'll do a **BIG** poster for  
DOGZOMBIES instead.

Derek and I definitely want a drummer



for the band. We can put the poster on the  
school noticeboard tomorrow.

It will GRAB everyone's attention.

(That's the plan, anyway.)

# WANTED

# DRUMMER



FOR BRILLIANT NEW BAND

## DOGZOMBIES

MUST Like + DUDE3

be able to DRUM (a bit) AUDITIONS

AT DEREK'S HOUSE IN HIS GARAGE WITH ME -

TOM GATES - AND DEREK FINGLE

WRITE YOUR NAME HERE

(Unless you are an ANNOYING person.)

(We like nice biscuits & you want to bring some)

That should do the trick.

(Tooth still hurting, though.)

# BACK TO ↑ SCHOOL

I'm struggling to get out of bed even more than usual. (I didn't sleep so well; ☹️☹️ tooth still throbbing.) School starts in half an hour and I have a LOT of things to remember today, like...

😊 LUNCH

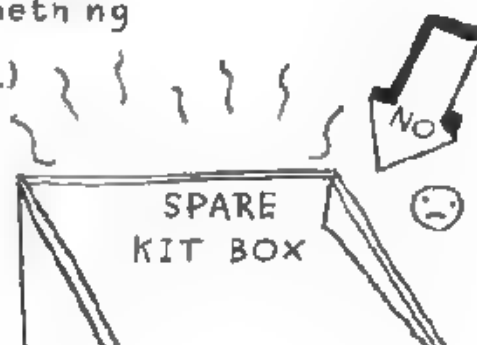
😊 MY REVIEW HOMEWORK



😊 DOGZOMBIES DRUMMER POSTER ☆

😊 PE KIT

(Or I'll be forced to wear something from the SPARE KIT BOX.)





me to



I eat breakfast carefully (on the good side of my mouth.) Mum tells

She thinks I'm suffering from "BacktoSchoolitis".

"Very common on the first day back at school."

Delia says, "He's got



IRRITATING BROTHER SYNDROME."

(Which is annoying.)

Dad asks me, "Have you got your lunch? Got your homework?"

"Got worms?" Delia adds.



Normally I would defend myself with

a **HILARIOUS** and funny 😊

answer. But I think the toothache has stopped that part of my brain from working properly

... for now.




Derek and I are a bit late for school. We try and do fast walking while I show Derek the



😊 He's impressed and offers to put the poster up for me.

"You'll forget," he says.

(Harsh but true.)

Back n class, it's like we've never been away.  
Marcus Meldrew manages  to ANNOY me  
within **TWO** seconds of sitting down at  
my desk.

He pulls up his school jumper and shows me his  
T-shirt.



I can't believe it!

He's wear ng a special **DUDE3** T-shirt  
that the WHOLE band have signed!

"It's NEW and the signatures are hand-stitched  
on so they won't ever wash out."

"I'm ffwilled for you, Marcus," I say.




(My tooth is throbbing, so I'm finding it hard to speak properly.)

Mr Fullerman begins to call the register and I answer,

"Earrrrrr, suuurrrrrr." 

He thinks I'm trying to be funny.

 Hal Hal (I'm not!)  
Then the class start laughing and Mr Fullerman peers over the register.

His beady eyes are fixed on 



He says,

**"TOM ... I hope you've remembered  
your REVIEW HOMEWORK. You've had  
two weeks to do it. And a letter to  
remind you."**



And I say, "Eeeerrrrrrrrrrrr" (to give myself  
time to think).

Because I **CAN'T** believe I've gone and  
forgotten it!



What I **SHOULD** have said to Mr Fullerman is.

"Sorry, sir. I have done it, but I forgot it. I'll bring it in tomorrow."





But for some **STUPID** reason I hear myself saying:

"Sir, it's like this...

My dad got a really **BAD**



**LURGY** bug over the holidays, then we ALL  got it. The doctor said it was VERY catching and the bugs could be 



**EVERYWHERE,**

including the paper I wrote my homework on.

So I just have to write it out again on  
**LURGY** -FREE paper  
just to be on the safe side.



I'll bring it in tomorrow ...



(Why, why? Why did I say that?)

Mr Fullerman says, 

**"Tom, is there something wrong with  
your mouth?"**

Because **this** is what I *actually* said:

"Errr, it's wike thiss...



My daaa go a wearrly add

**WURGY**


bug ower the

howidays, hen we AWW go it. The doctow said  
it was verwy caaching and thw uggs coowld bee  
EVERRWYWHERE, incwuding th aper I wwott  
eye omeworwk on.

Seww I ust ave too wwitte it owwt again on  
WURRGY-FWWEE apper usst to ee on the affe  
ide. I'ww bwing it in ommorow ... pwomise."

I managed to mutter,

"Sore twooth, sirr ... I'm OK wrreally."

Mr Fullerman looks at me  suspiciously. He carries on with the register but thinks I'm up to something.

(Like I'm doing th s deliberately!)



Amy and Marcus have both moved away from me because I said the word **LURGY** too many times.

"I have twoothache  ... not the LURGY," I tell Amy.

(She **might** feel sorry for me.)

But she's ignoring me and staring at the classroom door.

"Tom, Isn't that your dad waving at you?"

MY DAD? ○○

I look up and see someone who looks a bit like my dad?

IT IS MY DAD. 



He's trying to get my attention by waving my homework around (it looks like he's swatting flies). Groan.



Now **EVERYONE** is STARING at him, including Mr Fulerman, who goes over to the door. He looks a bit **CROSS** at being disturbed.

Dad starts talking to him ... ha! ha!  
and they BOTH start **LAUGHING**.  
ha! ha!

What's **SO** funny?

(This is going to be embarrassing,  
I can feel it.)

Mr Fullerman takes my work and Dad makes  
a thumbs-up sign at me



(with the rest of the class still watching).



Then Mr Fullerman comes in and says in  
front of **EVERYONE:**



**"Tom, your dad has very kindly  
dropped in your review homework.  
He also assures me that he's totally  
LURGY free and so is your homework.  
Which must be a HUGE relief to the  
WHOLE CLASS, I'm sure."**

(The shame...)

At least Mr Fullerman has my homework now ...  
I suppose.

I hope today gets better.  
(Though it's not looking promising.)





It's no good.

My tooth is hurting SO much.  
I can't concentrate any more  
groan.

Mr Fullerman sees that my face has

# SWELLED UP





a LOT. He sends me  
straight to the sick  
room...




On the way to the sick room, I walk past some little kids who stare at me like I'm some kind of MONSTER.



Even Mrs Mumble  in the school office looks concerned. She rings my dad straight away. He's only  just got home when he has to come straight back to school.



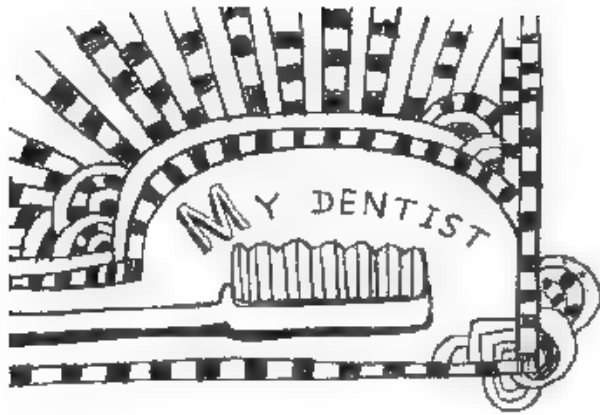
My tooth  hurts SO badly I don't even care that he is wearing a STUPID T-shirt.



Dad makes me an emergency appointment at the dentist and we

drive straight there.





Most dentists try and make you feel

chilled 😊 and relaxed 🌴 by having things

like fish tanks 🐟 and soothing music 🎵  
(to drown out the sound of

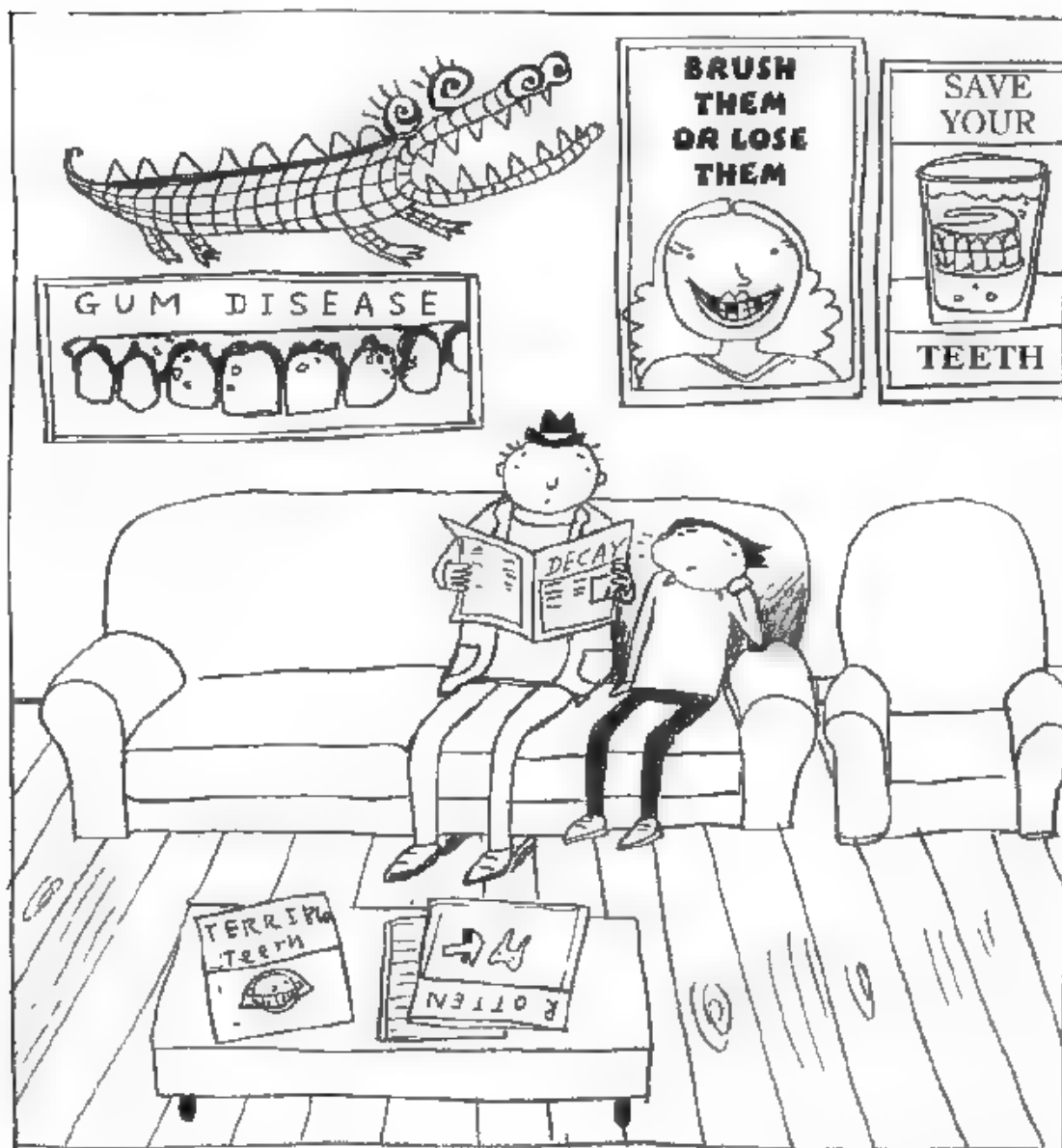
**DRILLING).**

But my dentist is a bit different.

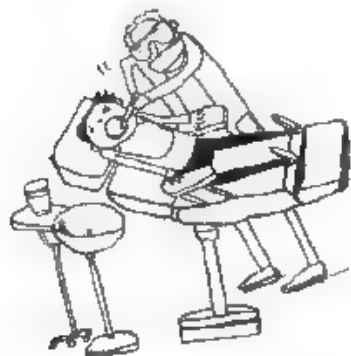
He has a **SCARY**-looking metal crocodile  
with sharp teeth on the wall. As well as  
posters of people with rotten  
teeth and gum diseases.



(I think he's trying to make a point.)



Mr Kay takes a look at me and says,



"Mmmm. **not** good.  
young man."

(Like I don't know that  
already.) Then he picks at  
my tooth with one of

those horrid metal **pokey things.**



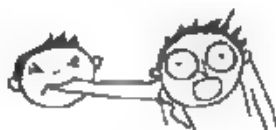
"**ARGH!!**"

I scream and he says,

"Does that hurt?"

(Errrrr, **YES! LOTS!**)

Apparently when I was little I once BIT a  
dentist.



Now Mum thinks that they have a

**warning** on my file like this:



**M**r Kay explains EVERYTHING to me before he does it. (In case I turn vicious.)



He says,

**"Raise your hand if you feel any pain at all."**

So I raise my hand ... even though he hasn't started yet.

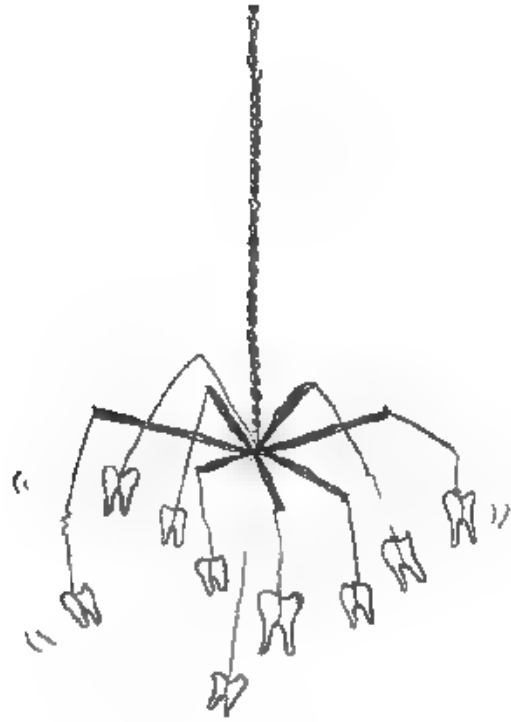
Groan ... now he has.



I get through the injections, drilling and filling by keeping my eyes tightly ➡ ➡ shut and thinking of different ways of getting my own back on Delia for teasing me.



When I do open them, I can see a **WEIRD** mobile hanging from the ceiling.





I think it's made of teeth?

It is made of teeth.

Mr Kay points at it and says,  
"That's what happens when you **don't** look after  
your teeth."

It's really freaky.

I'm **SO** relieved when it's all over. 😊

My face is numb and I end up <sup>dribbling</sup>  
the pink  water Mr Kay   
gives me to swish round my mouth everywhere.



Dad says I am **VERY** brave.

I agree 😊 and suggest maybe

a small



might be in order?

Mr Kay suddenly remembers to give me some  
**"special stickers"**.

(They're not exactly my idea of a treat, but  
I'm guessing something **SWEET** will be out  
of the question now?)





Interesting selection of stickers

We stop off to pick up the tablets I have to take (I don't want my face to **SWELL** up again).

Dad likes my stickers. He thinks it's

**HILARIOUS** that my dentist is called **Mr D. Kay...**

"A dentist called Mr D. KAY - that's **IRONIC**," he says.

I have no idea what he's talking about.

Dad buys me a comic for a treat instead. When we get home, Mum is being very nice to me too. Unlike Delia,



who thinks it's funny to  
offer me **SWEETS**.

Then she takes them away,  
saying, "Oh, sorry, I forgot  
you've just been to the  
dentist. Ha! Ha!"



**M**um catches Delia tormenting me and tells  
her off. (Yes, Delia, back off.)

Then Mum says that I can eat my (non-chewy)  
dinner on a tray in front of the telly without  
Delia bothering me.

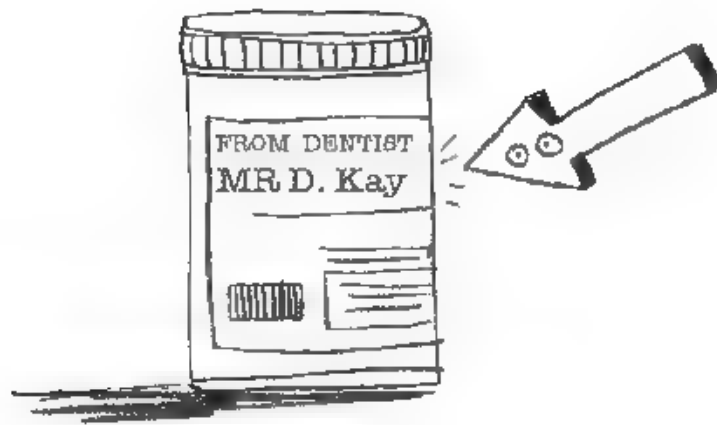
It's bliss.

**A**fter dinner Dad reminds me to take my tablet. I'm looking at the bottle and FINALLY I get Dad's dentist name joke...

Mr D. Kay.

Mr Decay.

Hilarious!





This morning Mum  
says I am well

enough to go to school today despite  
me doing a "sad face". (It was worth a try.)

At least she gives me a REAL sick note that  
says:

Dear Mr Fullerman,  
Please could Tom be excused from PE  
just for now as he has a nasty tooth  
infection which has almost cleared up

Kind regards,  
Rita Gates

But I might try and change it to ... ALL WEEK  
or ALL MONTH.

(Give it a go?)

**A**t school, I'm busy telling a group of friends about my **DEADLY** and **DANGEROUS** tooth experience.





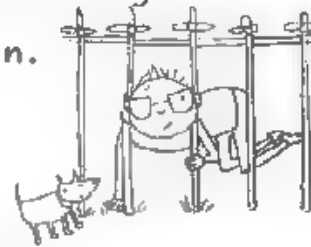
"It took my dentist ~~one two three~~ SEVEN  
WHOLE hours to save it AND the dental nurse  
almost *FAINTED*."

Everyone looks impressed.

So I add, "The dentist said I was very very brave."

(That bit's true.)

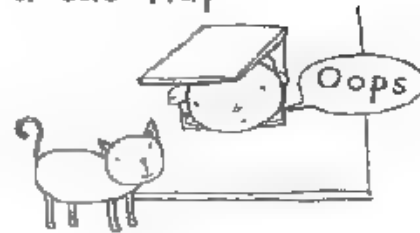
Norman tells us about the time he got his head  trapped  in some railings and had to be rescued by firemen.  
(Why am I not surprised?)




 My mate **SOLID** shows us the scar on his arm from when he fell off his bike.

  
It looks like a long zip.

Derek once got stuck in a cat flap  
(he's NEVER told  
me that before.).

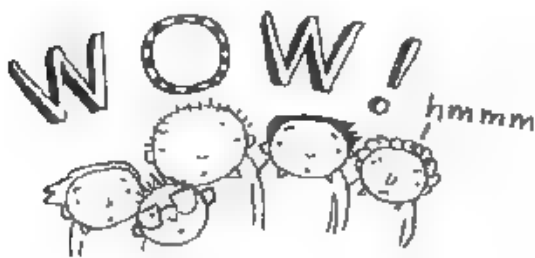


Then Mark Clump  rolls up his trousers  
and shows us something that looks like two  
dots on his leg.



"What's that?" I ask.

"Snake bite," he says. We all take a closer look.



Marcus Meldrew  
pretends he's not  
very impressed at all.

He says,

"Huh! That's nothing. I was bitten by  
my new pet."

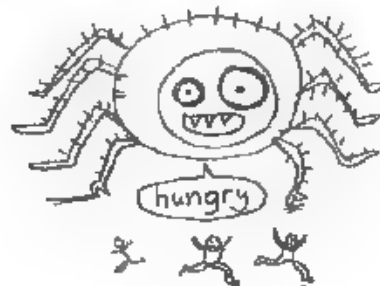


"Really? Have you got a snake too, Marcus?"  
Derek asks. 

"My pet is **FAR** more scary than a snake."

"What is it ... a man-eating

**SPIDER?** "   
I say.



"I've got a **VERY BIG** new dog.



"I'm training him right now."

"A dog ... like how big a dog?"

"**HUGE** ... he's a bit **WILD**. I had to fight him off and that's when he chewed me... I've got a bad scar."



"Let's see the scar, then?" Norman asks.

"No, it's still **VERY** painful."

Marcus rubs his leg and walks away with a slight limp.



(**I** think **M**arcus is telling fibs.)

"Mind you," I say, "if I was a  
dog, I'd bite Marcus too."  
Derek agrees with me.



Then **Mr K**een (the headmaster) blows the  
whistle to go into school and  
makes us **J U M P**.



**PEEP!** His face gets redder with  
every puff. It looks like a  
**BIG RED** tomato now.



**PEEP!**

And **that's** when I suddenly remember

I have a **VERY** good reason to:



**AVOID** Mr Keen.

This is because last term Mr Keen heard me singing "Delia's a Weirdo", a song I wrote about Delia.\*

He immediately put me in the school concert!  
Which could have been **total humiliation** in front of the whole school. (Mostly due to lack of practise and slightly rude lyrics about Delia.)  
Luckily Derek came to my rescue and saved me from possible **Singing Shame**.

(\*See p. 191, The Brilliant World of Tom Gates, for whole story.)

Mr Keen thinks I'm upset at missing the school concert.



(I'm not.)

I hold my bag up to my face and try to sneak past him. Despite me using small children for extra cover ... he sees me.



**"TOM!"**

(Keep walking, keep walking...)



**"TOM GATES! Just the person I was looking for!"**

(Too late.)

"Y es, Mr K een." 

**"I see you're in a BAND with Derek Fingle?"**

(How did he know that?)

**"And you're looking for a NEW drummer?"**

For a TERRIBLE moment I think Mr Keen wants to join our band until he says,

**"Very good poster, by the way."**

Phew.

(Derek must have put the poster up yesterday.)

**"I know how disappointed you were to miss out on performing in the school concert."**

"No, no..."

He ignores me.

Mr Keen then tells me that Mr Sprocket



(our music teacher) has put together a

## SPECIAL SCHOOL BAND

that will be performing in a very important assembly. And GUESS WHAT? Thanks to Mr Keen, Derek and I are IN the school band NOW.

**“Isn’t that exciting, Tom?”**

I’m lost for words.

**“What instrument does Derek play, Tom?”**

“Keyboards, Mr Keen ... but I don’t think—”

Too late - Mr Keen has already gone.

Derek won’t be happy.



I don't even know what kind of music the school band plays.



I suppose it might be OK? (Extra band practice for **DOGZOMBIES** at least.)

But Mr Keen  
has reminded  
me about the



I can't wait to find out WHO wants to be in our band!

On the way to class I go and take a quick look at the poster.



**WANTED**

**DRUMMER**

FOR BRILLIANT NEW BAND

**DOGZOMBIES**

MUST Like **DUDE3**

be able to **DRUM** (a bit) **AUDITIONS**

AT DEREK'S HOUSE IN HIS GARAGE WITH ME -  
TOM GATES - AND DEREK FINGLE

WRITE YOUR NAME HERE  
(unless you are an ANNOYING person...)

(We like nice biscuits if you want to bring some)

Mickey Mouse Norman Watson  
Amy Porter Florence Mitchell Superman  
A Worm Donald Duck A Slug

(Oh...)

I'm not sure everyone is taking this very seriously.

# Hang on ... AMY PORTER

has added her name!

That's a surprise.



Amy is obviously taking **DOGZOMBIES** very seriously. Because she is super smart with excellent taste in music. I'll tell Derek the news like this:

**"YEAH! GOOD NEWS! 😊**

Amy Porter is auditioning for the band.

**BOO! BAD NEWS. ☹**

Mr Keen has put US in the SCHOOL BAND."

(I'll say the bad news bit really fast ... he might not notice.)

In class, Mr Fullerman asks about my tooth.



So I hand over my



Dear Mr Fullerman,

Please could Tom be excused from PE  
just for <sup>the week</sup> ~~the week~~ as he has a <sup>VERY SERIOUS</sup> ~~nasty~~ tooth

infect on which has almost cleared up.

Kind regards,

R ta GateS

Mr Fullerman reads it carefully.

(I hope he doesn't spot my "changes".)

So far so good.

Then he gives me a **LONG** →  
list of work  to catch up on.

I tell Mr Fullerman this MUST be a mistake  
because I was only away for one day. Amy  
says, "You missed loads."



Great.

Now I'm wondering if this is a good time 😊  
to mention the **DOGZOMBIES** audition poster  
that Amy signed up for. I could give her a few  
tips?

(Like "Bring caramel wafers".)

But Mr Fullerman interrupts. He tells us about the **“really exciting school field trip I have planned”**.

(Sounds like fun.)



**“We’ll be looking out for all kinds of plants, bugs and odd creatures!”**



I nudge Amy and point to Marcus...

“Found one.”





He gives me a teacher stare and says,  
**"TOM, along with finding odd  
creatures, I'll be expecting YOU to tell  
us LOTS of interesting information  
about trees, as it seems you're a bit of  
an expert."**

Which shuts me up.

I have NO idea why Mr Fullerman thinks I'm an  
expert on trees.



**T**HIS would be my idea of an INTERESTING TREE.

Next **Mr Fuller**man hands out more  
homework ... groan.

**Class 5F Homework**  
**From: Mr Fullerman**  
**Oakfield School**

Dear Class 5F

This week I want you to write a proper  
thank-you letter.

You need to decide who you're writing to  
and what you are thanking them for.  
Was it a present or perhaps some good  
advice?

Use your imagination.

Describe how you feel and remember to lay  
out the letter correctly.

Looking forward to reading your letters.

Kind regards

**Mr Fullerman**

The homework could be worse, I suppose.  
At least it's **not** fractions or anything  
really tricky like that.

How hard is it to say




**THANK YOU?**


Unless it's to Delia.



But that **NEVER** happens.

At home time Derek and I are busy  
discussing **Who** has signed our  
**DOGZOMBIES** audition poster.

So far it's only  Amy, \_\_\_\_\_  
 Florence \_\_\_\_\_  
and  
 NORMAN. \_\_\_\_\_

I'm guessing   
and **MICKEY**  
**MOUSE**  
won't turn up.

I remember to tell Derek that Mr Keen might want to talk to him about being in the school band.

"I'll just say **NO** thanks, Sir." 

"Too Late ... we're **in** the school band."

"At least he doesn't know I play keyboard," Derek says.

"...he might now." 

(It just slipped out, sorry.)"

Derek is wondering what exactly Mr Keen is planning, when Marcus runs past

*REALLY f @ s t.*



He says **Move move** and pushes us aside. I notice Marcus has lost the limp caused by the terrible SCAR from his **ENORMOUS** new dog.

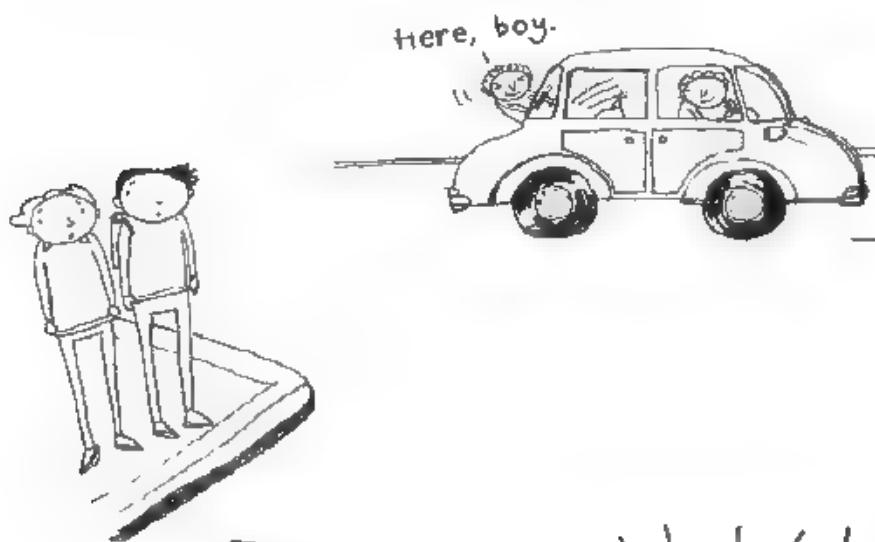
"What's the hurry?" I say, but he's already gone.



Derek says, "Let's follow him outside and see what he's up to."

"OK."

Marcus has ——— rushed over to his dad,  
who's in the car waiting. We watch Marcus  
open the door and *le a n* inside, like he's  
trying to reach something.



Derek says,  
"I can hear **BARKING!**"

"So can I."

"It must be his new dog!"

"The one that BIT him!" I say.



We can't see  the dog yet but his BARK is VERY **LOUD**.

Marcus is holding a dog lead and being pulled around.



"Maybe Marcus  a **FIERCE** dog after all?" Derek says.

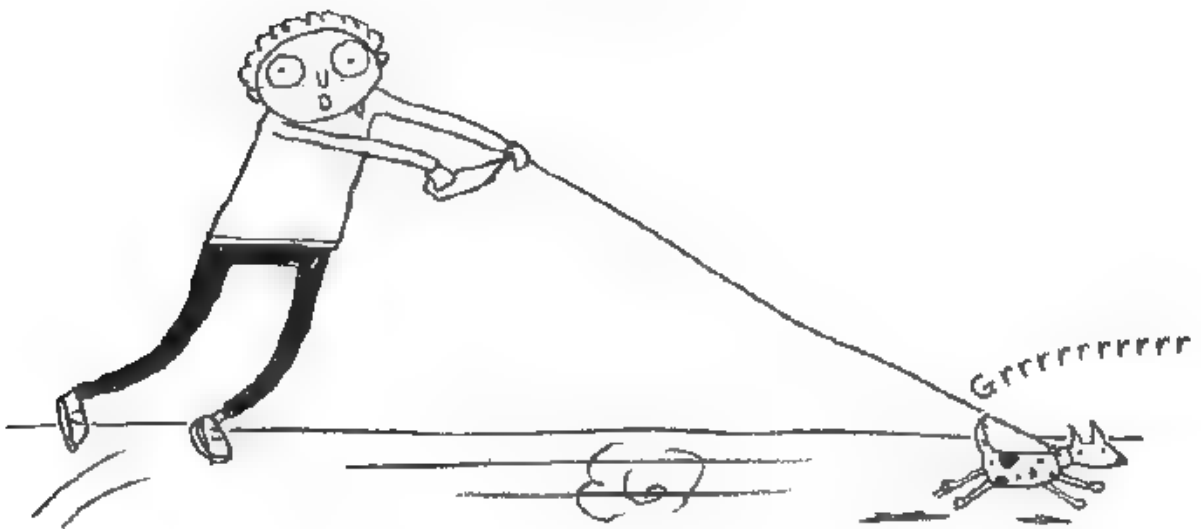
"From the way he's struggling to control it, his dog must be  really

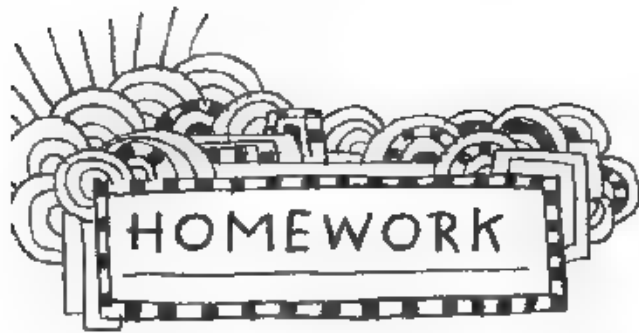
**BIG**

and **STRONG**," I say...

**STRONG**

...or maybe not.





Ever since Mr Fullerman sent that letter home about my REVIEW HOMEWORK, Mum is being tough on me.

Homework first, dinner after, Tom.



But it's difficult to concentrate because I keep thinking about:

1. Marcus being dragged along by



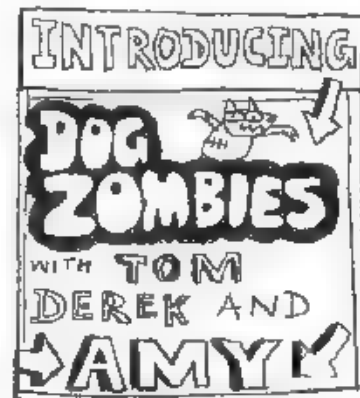
his teeny weeny dog. **Hilarious!**

2. **D**inner.
3. **D**inner.
4. **T**he DOGZOMBIE drummer auditions.

It's excellent news that Amy Porter has put her name down. She's so SUPER SMART at EVERYTHING. I can't wait to see how good she is at drumming.



I think this  
could work.



We are holding the auditions  
in Derek's garage at the weekend.  
Derek's dad, Mr Fingle, has been BANNED.



Everyone who turns up will have a chance to audition, even if they're rubbish.

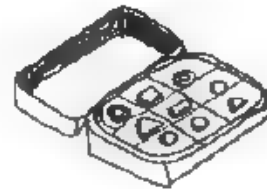
As well as the audition, I'm ALSO thinking about...

5. Dad's birthday, which is really soon. What to get him?



-Draw a picture?

-Chocolates?



-Socks



- New hat?



Mum told Aunty Alice



that she had



already arranged  
a little get-together

for Dad to avoid having a party  
like last year.



Now EVERYONE is coming round to ours.

Including Granny and Granddad Gates,

or



as I like to call them,  
because they are very  
old and ancient.

Which has just given me a **GREAT** idea  
for my THANK YOU letter homework. Genius ...  
thanks, Fossils.

TO: GRANNY GATES

Dear Granny,  
**THANK  
YOU**  
FOR THE  
**POCKET  
MONEY.**

Love, Tom

(YOUR FAVOURITE GRANDSON.) x x

Tom.

I have no doubt you are  
a wonderful grandson.

But I need to see a much  
longer thank-you letter  
next time, please.

1 merit.

But well done for joining  
the NEW SCHOOL BAND.  
Mr Keen was extremely  
pleased.

Mr Fullerman

Great, now it's official.

Written in black and white by  
Mr Fullerman that I **AM**  
in the school band.



I'm guessing he wasn't impressed with my  
letter.

And I only got one merit. Which is  
a bit **harsh**, I think?

Maybe this might help...



To: Mr Fullerman


Let me explain about the slightly small  
thank-you letter.

My granny is VERY  with dodgy  
eyes  and she falls asleep a lot.

So a thank-you letter needs to be in

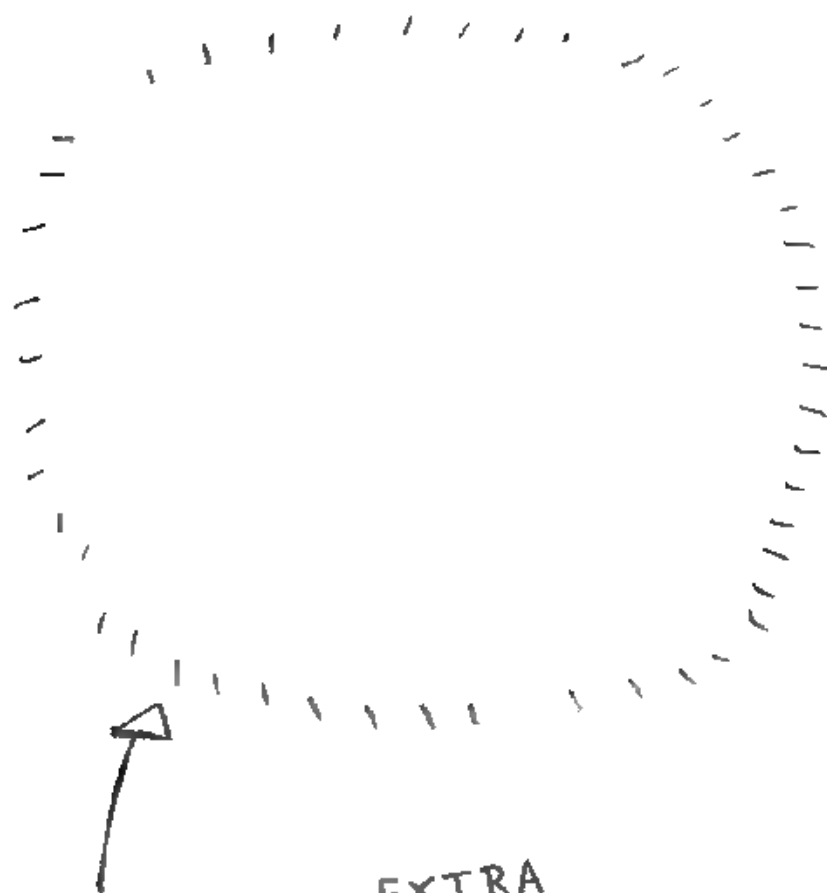
REALLY BIG WRITING and

VERY VERY SHORT. Or she can't read  
it. (I am a thoughtful grandson ...

it's true.) 

From: Tom Gates

 (Hard-working pupil who  
deserves a few more merits, maybe?)



Space left for EXTRA  
merits ... is still empty.  
Oh well, worth a try.



Over the next few days Mr Fullerman reminds everyone in class that...

**"REALLY hard-working pupils get the extra merits."**

(OK, point taken.)

So I'm doing some EXTRA reading at home when Granny and Granddad pop in for a cup of tea. I can hear them chit-chatting



chit  
chat

downstairs with Dad.



I go to say hello (and sneak a biscuit).



Tea



Fossils



BISCUITS


But Dad spots me and says, "No biscuits for you until your tooth infection has cleared up."



Just then Delia comes in and hears the word "INFECTION".

"Ugh ... disgusting. What's he got now?" 

Delia is leaning away from me like I have THE **LURGY** while helping herself to a biscuit. Right in front of me, too!


 "That's not FAIR," I say.



"Delia hasn't got a bad  tooth like you," Dad says.

"Ugh, he's **Rotting**," she

laughs, holding her nose.

Granddad says that I **MUST** take care of my teeth or  I'll end up looking like him.



Then he says, "Do you want to see what happens to you if you **DON'T** look after your teeth?"

Granny tries to  stop him.



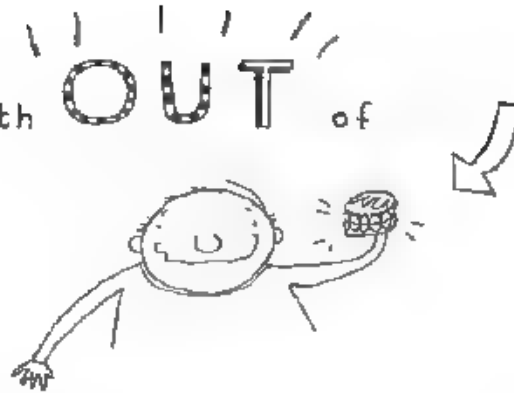
"Don't show him, **Bob**... It's not nice."

**NOW** I'm *REALLY* curious.

"Your teeth look fine to me, Granddad."

That's when he turns his back ..

and takes his teeth OUT of his mouth!



It's HILARIOUS!

Now he's got them IN HIS HAND. (OK, that looks weird.)



"See ... no teeeffff lefffft."

Granddad's mouth reminds me of a very old turtle.



Delia says, "...that's rank."



Granny tells Granddad to put them back and "don't be so childish."

Which doesn't stop Granddad from pretending to BITE — Granny before slipping his teeth back into his mouth. (They make a strange clunking sound as they settle down.)



Granny tries to change the subject (well, sort of).

She's MADE her own biscuits.

Uh oh.

“They are **packed** full of nuts, honey and all kinds of other **LOVELY** stuff,” she says.

Granny Mavis has very weird taste in food. So “other lovely stuff” could really be ANYTHING.

Here are a couple of her favourite “specials”.



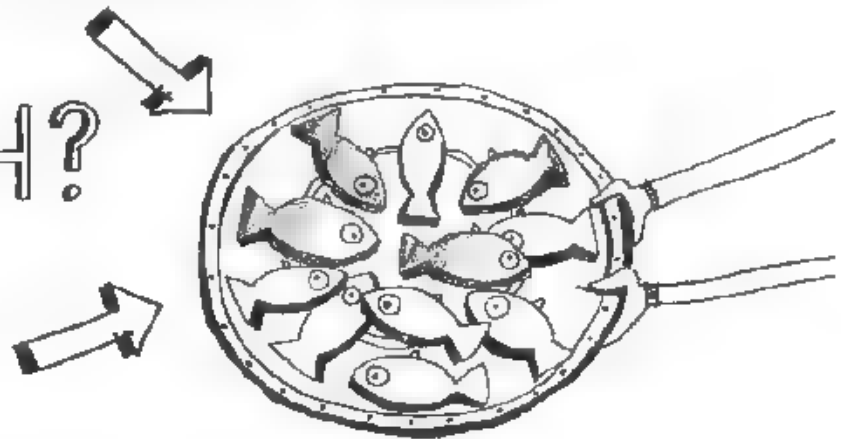
Dad says I'm allowed a home-made biscuit if I promise to brush my teeth afterwards.

Granny arranges her "biscuits" on a plate and says,  "Tuck in!"

But her biscuits look a bit like...

FISH?

(Oh dear.)



"They're not fish flavoured!" Granny assures me.


Phew. But they do have **BIG** stary eyes.

(I risk it ... for a biscuit.)

Mmmmmm,  surprisingly tasty for a fish biscuit.

The eyes are a bit crunchy, though.

Delia's already left (after Granddad's teeth trick) so there are more biscuits for me. When Dad's not looking I sneak a couple for later.

 **RESULT!** 

While the Fossils are still here, Mum remembers to invite them to Dad's birthday party.



Dad is still not keen on having a party at ALL after last year.



So while he's grumbling and complaining, I remind everyone that it's MY birthday soon. And I'm VERY keen to have a

\*  
PARTY\* with presents.  
\* \* \*

Granddad wonders what I'm interested in these days.

(Perfect time to drop "present hints".)

I am about to say **DUDE3**  electric guitars, drawing stuff, that kind of thing.

When Mum BUTTS in with  
"Tom's REALLY interested in trees,  
aren't you, Tom?"



I am? 

"Remember the wonderful  
piece of homework you did  
on trees?"



Errrrrrrr.



I decide to take the praise while it's being  
handed to me because:



But just in case I say...



"are nice, but I don't want one for my birthday, thank you."

Granddad asks me about

**DOGZOMBIES**

too.



(I'm very impressed he remembered my band's name!)

He says he has the **PERFECT** venue for us to play our **VERY FIRST GIG** ... when we're ready.

"This place <sup>OO</sup>s always looking for new acts," Granddad says.



"Really?"

"Yes, you'll have a 'big' audience of friendly people."

WOW, EXCELLENT! I can't wait to tel Derek. Then Granny offers me another biscuit, so I take it (to go with the other two I already have).

I have LOTS of good stuff to chat about with Derek now.

😊 FIRST EVER **DOGZOMBIES** GIG

😊 FISH  BISCUITS

😊 GRANDDAD'S TEETH





**R**ound at Derek's house, he is  
**STILL** not very happy about  
being in the school band.



**S**o I give him the **TWO** fish biscuits, which  
makes him laugh.



"Your granny's weird," he says, looking at the  
biscuit   eyes.

"But they taste nice, though," he adds. 

I'm telling Derek how **THE**  
always that bonkers **FOSSIES** are not  
and sometimes

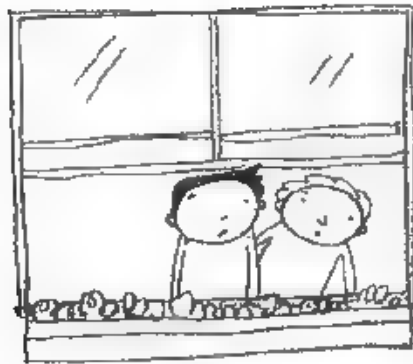


they're **REALLY** funny.

"**M**ostly they are just like really ordinary  
grandparents, honestly."

Derek says, "Are you sure about that?"

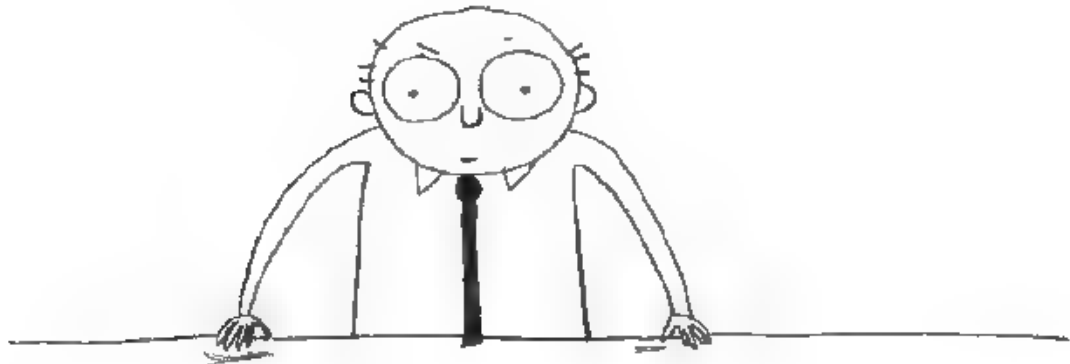




OK, maybe Derek has a point.



Mr Fullerman



... is doing that teacher thing of *leaning* on  
his desk *Staring* at everyone.

He says he has got some very IMPORTANT news  
for us all.

(His idea of what's important is different to  
mine.)

For instance ... **DOGZOMBIES** band auditions are **important.** I'm still not sure if I should say anything to **AMY** about them. I decide not to.

Not the right time. I notice that she's holding her **pencil** and tapping it on the desk (which is the sort of thing a drummer would do).



It's a good sign.



While I have been studying **AMY'S** drumming, Mr Fullerman has gone ahead and made his

## "IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT".

I've missed it. Oh well.

But then he asks me a question.



"Isn't that right ... Tom?"



(This is why I prefer being at the



of the classroom, not at  
the front.)

I have **NO** idea what Mr Fullerman is talking  
about, so I just agree with him.



**"Great, well done Tom. Does anyone else want to go too?"**

Huh?



**"No ... OK, looks like it's just you, Tom. And Derek too. Off you go. You'll be the first on the chart."**



WHAT? THE FIRST? I have a horrible feeling about this. Well, at least I get to miss a lesson (I think?).

★ ★ ★ **GOLD STAR AWARD CHART** ★ ★ ★  
 ★ ★ CLASS 5F ★ ★

MARK CLUMP

ROSS WHITE

BRAD GALLOWAY

SOLOMAN STEWART

TOM GATES ★

PANSY BENNET

PAUL JOLLY

INDRANI HINDLE

LEROY LEWIS

FLORENCE MITCHELL

MARCUS MELDREW

JULIA MORTON

TREVOR PETERS

AMY PORTER

NORMAN WATSON

AMBER TULLEY GREEN

The GOOD NEWS is, I've got the



GOLD



on the

new

~~~~~

Award Chart.

Mr Fullerman has given me a star for joining the school band. (Like I had a choice?)

Which is unexpected but nice.

The **BAD**  news is, School band practice

~~~~~  
is on **NOW** and I have to go on my own. ☹️ Oh well, at least I'm missing maths lessons in class.

**Question:** How bad can a school band really be?

Answer: Worse than I thought.

Mr Sprocket is delighted to see us.

Derek and I are not so delighted.

“Let me explain,” Mr Sprocket tells us. “This school band is different. We use recycled rubbish made into instruments.



We play new modern music too."

(Which just means no one has ever heard of it.)

"Not exactly DOGZOMBIES, is it?" I whisper to Derek.



Mr Sprocket asks us to choose an "instrument". As there are **NO** guitars or keyboards I pick the **plastic** bottle looking thing with chopsticks. Derek goes for the wooden box with elastic bands.



We do the best we can under the circumstances.



When I hit the bottles they are supposed to make different notes.



So far, mine only have two notes.

**CLANG!**

and even

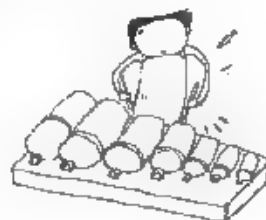
**LOUDER  
CLANG!**

The other kids are more practised 😞  
than us - they are making it look easy (it's  
not!).

We keep making mistakes.



Isn't the bottles too hard.



Derek has pinged quite a few of  
his elastic bands.



PING

Then I break a  
chopstick and half of it flies through  
the air.



School band is not going well.

Even Mr Sprocket looks a little weary.



One kid puts h's hand up.

"Sir, why are they in our band?"



"OUR BAND"? I thought it was a school band?

Mr Sprocket telis him to put his hand down because we'll be fine,

after one or two more rehearsals.



"More like one or two **HUNDRED**."



I can hear more kids laughing now.

I'm going to HAVE to think of a really EXCELLENT excuse to get out of this band. It's been an Awful practice.

Derek agrees. "That was embarrassing," he says.

Then I notice where the other half of my chopstick has landed. I nudge Derek. "No, **THAT'S** embarrassing." Mr Sprocket looks like he has a bow in his hair. We leave quickly, before he notices.



Outside the classroom, Amy and Florence are walking past.

"Is this <sup>your</sup> new band, Tom?" Amy asks.

"No way," I say. "This is the school band. It's a bit rubbish, really." The kids in the school band hear me and are not happy. ☹️

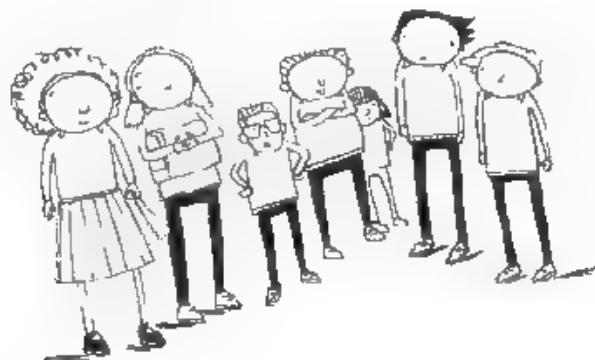


"**W**e're not rubbish. **YOU'RE** the one who's rubbish."

"And so's your friend."

"We'd be ten times better if you weren't in the school band."

(They have a point.)



**G**REAT. Now Amy and Florence think that we're hopeless. I'm just about to **EXPLAIN** to them that we play

REAL instruments in **DOGZOMBIES**

But Amy and Florence have gone.

"<sup>DO</sup>This **school band** could **RUIN** our reputation ... if we had one," Derek says.

It's true.



Today we've been a bit:

⇒ **RUBBISH**

⇒ **SHAMED**

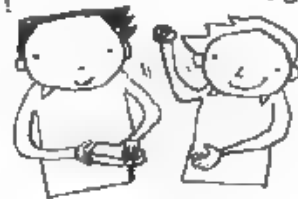
and ⇒ **EMBARRASSED.**

Derek and I decide we have to get out of the school band, one way or another.

It's the most important thing to do ever.


Until I find a spare wafer in my pocket.

Share a  
wafer?



YES



The poster has been up for a few days and we're doing the auditions TOMORROW, so I am very excited to see  who else has added their names to the list.

Let me see...

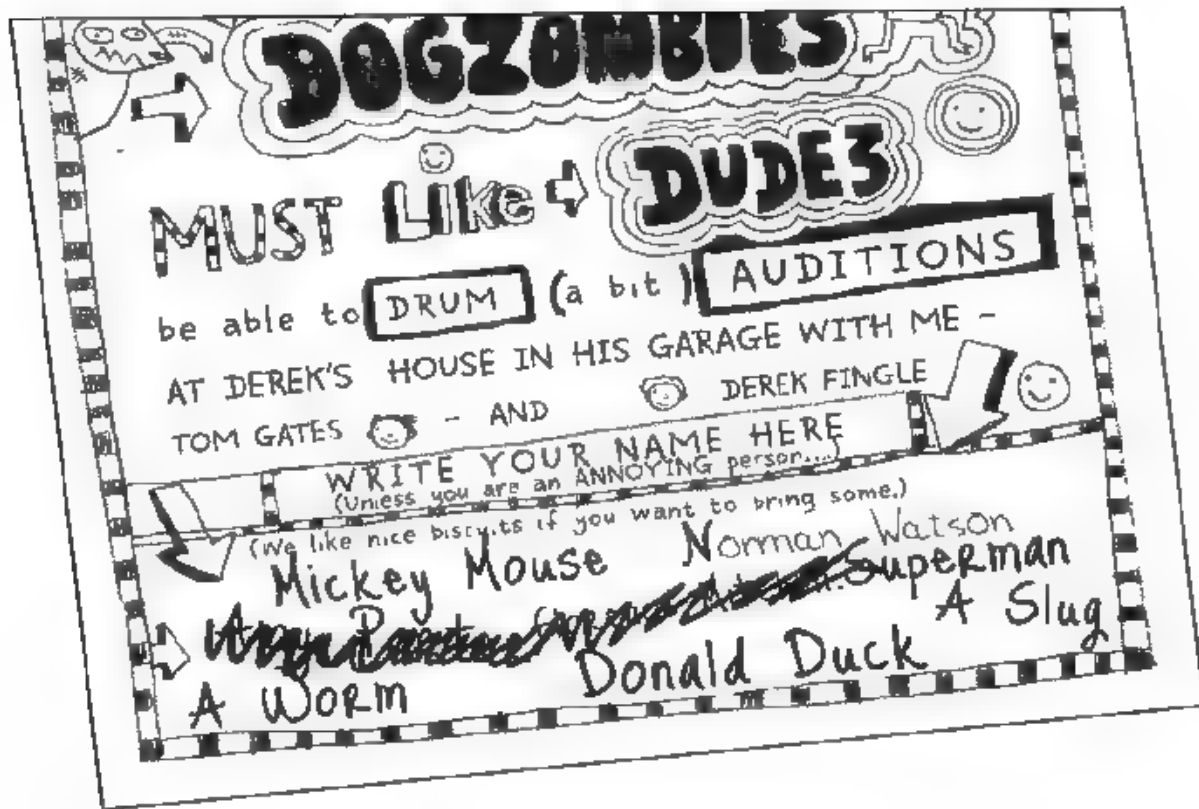
# HANG ON!

## Amy Porter

AND

## FLORENCE MITCHELL'S

names have been **CROSSED OUT?**



What's going on? Who's done that?

So far the only *REAL* person who's coming to the audition is: **HYPERACTIVE**

**NORMAN WATSON.** 

I take down the poster and go and find Amy quickly.

Stan the school caretaker is holding open  
the door for some kids. I can see ○ ○ Amy  
and Florence in front of me. So I

*RUSH* past everyone, saying,



"EMERGENCY!

EMERGENCY!

EMERGENCY!"

Which gets their



attention.

I catch up with Amy and Florence and show them the poster.

"Look at what

.....  
**SOMEBODY**

HAS done!

Can you believe they've actually **CROSSED**

**BOTH** your names **OFF** from the

audition! What kind of an **IDIOT** would

ruin your chances of being in **DOGZOMBIES**

by doing something as **STUPID**

as that?"

Then Amy says,





(Oh ... I wasn't expecting that.)

Florence says, "We don't play drums, Tom."

"And we didn't write our names on your poster. Sorry," Amy adds.

"Does that mean you won't be auditioning, then?" Just checking.



Caretaker Stan is listening to our conversation.

"Hey! Looking for a drummer? Well, look no further!"



Stan thinks he's funny. Groan.

He pretends to do a drum  
roll and cymbal crash.  
(Which is rubbish.)



The door slowly closes while  
Stan continues to air drum.

I'm trying not to look fed up.



"You wouldn't want us in your band, Tom,"  
Florence says.

"We'd be **ROTTEN**," Amy adds.

"Worse than Stan?" I say.

(We can still hear Stan's keys jangling in the  
background.)

Amy suspects whoever wrote the  
*Silly* names on the poster also wrote  
their names on it too.

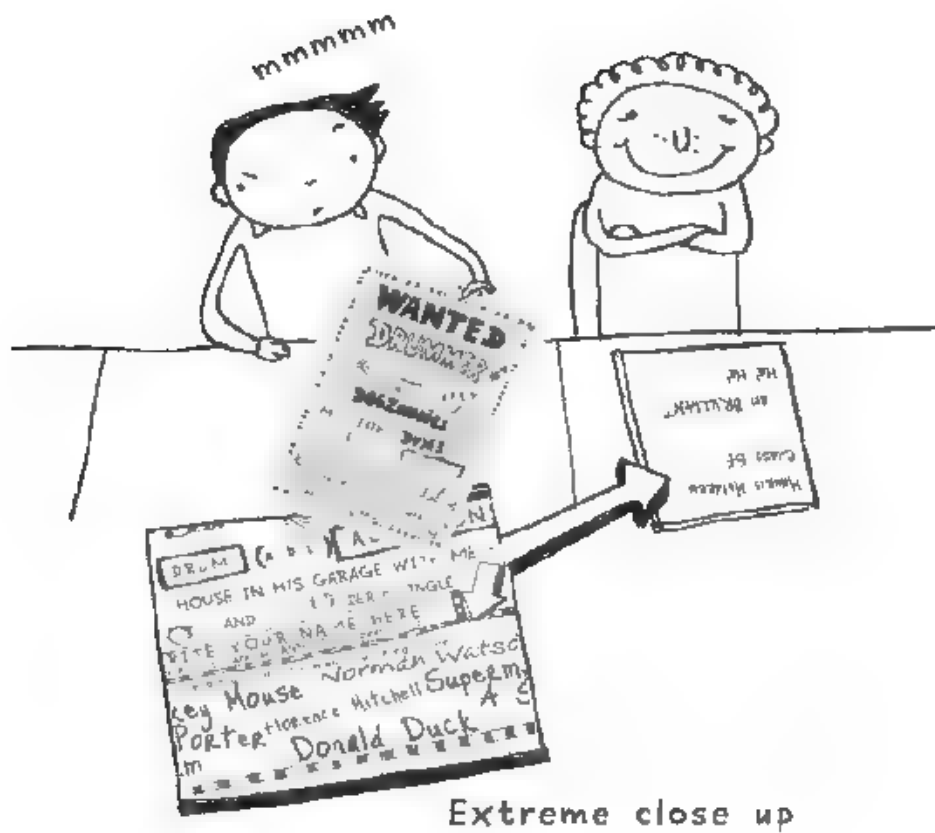
Good point.

"See if you can match the handwriting on the poster to anyone in our class," Amy suggests.

"That's genius!" I say. (She's so smart.)

Whoever wanted to mess up the audition poster is probably feeling pretty pleased with themselves right now.

I'm searching the classroom for **ANYONE** who seems slightly more smug than usual...



Surprise, surprise...



It **WAS** Marcus who wrote on the poster. He admits it.

He says, "You didn't actually think Amy and Florence wanted to be in your band, did you?"  
Ha! Ha! Ha! he laughs. (He's so annoying.)

Mr Fullerman has marked all our  
**REVIEW** homework and is handing them back  
to us.

**"Well done, Tom, excellent work,"** he  
says.



Marcus doesn't get a mention.



(I did my homework quickly, so this is very good news.)

**Good work, Tom.**

**Your special interest in trees will be very useful on the field trip.**

**Well Done**

**3 merits and ONE GOLD STAR.**



THAT'S why Mr Fullerman thought I  
was interested in TREES.



I'll show this to Mum and Dad, who might



give me a REWARD.

Cake



REWARD



Cash Reward

I could try the "good parenting" line again?  
Worth a go...



Right now I enjoy collecting my

SECOND

GOLD



2 merits = 1 **GOLD** STAR

Whoever gets the **MOST** stars at the end of the term wins "spectacular prizes". (So Mr Fullerman tells us.)



I suspect the prizes will be things like pencil cases and school tea towels.

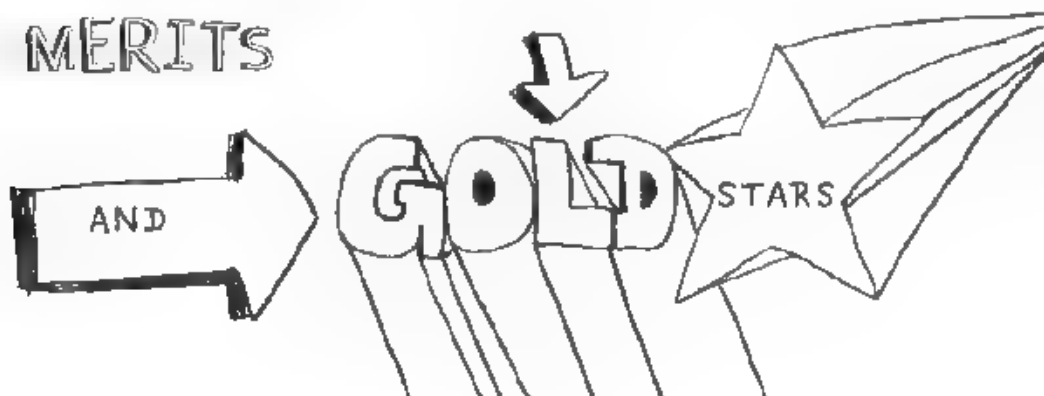


NOT very spectacular at all.

But as I am in the lead with two stars ... I don't care.

I leave my book open so MARCUS can see my

**MERITS**






Sadly, nobody else (**REAL**) has put their names down for our audition.

Looks like it's **ONLY NORMAN** coming now.



I don't think his audition will take too long.

Derek  hopes someone else will turn up ... other than just his dad. Who keeps popping in.



Anyone here yet?

Derek sends him away.

I remind Derek that my granddad has

already booked **DOGZOMBIES**<sup>D</sup> FIRST EVER  
GIG!

"We can still do it, even if we don't have a  
drummer," I say.

(That's plan B, in case no one turns up.)

"Granddad says we'll be in front of a nice  
friendly crowd."

"BRILLIANT."<sup>DD</sup> Derek is  
trying to be positive.



"We could become the **NEXT**

**DUDE3**

," I say. How cool would that be?

Then Norman turns up, which brings us right back down to earth.

He's being his usual **TWITCHY** self.

"Hey, Norman, just relax and play anything you want to," I tell him.

Whoops! (We're not expecting too much from him.)



"Bit nervous," he says as

he knocks over another drum.

It's not a great start.



The noise gives Derek's dad an excuse to COME in AGAIN to see what we're getting up to (like he doesn't already know).

I'm really hoping that Norman's drumming is better than his swimming ... but so far, it's not looking good.

Norman settles down (a bit).

Then he starts to play.

And we're all in for a MASSIVE SURPRISE...

★ NORMAN is ★  
★ AMAZING! ★



OK, he is a bit wild...

When he's finished playing, we tell Norman he's "IN THE BAND!" Which sets him off again.



Norman is much better at playing than we are.  
"We might have to practise more,"

I say to Derek.

"You'll sound like a proper band with Norman drumming!" Mr Fingle tells us.

Then he adds...



Talking of PROPER bands.

(Uh oh.) We haven't had a chance to



Norman  about  
Mr Fingle's little

CHATS.



He's already rummaging in his record collection.

"Have you ever heard of a band called

THE WHO, Norman?"

"Who?" Norman says.

"NO, THE WHO,"

Mr Fingle repeats.

Then Norman asks, "Who are The Who, then?"

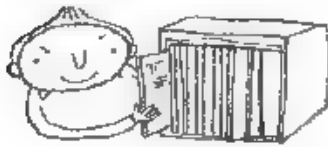
Which is really confusing.

Derek wants his dad to STOP chatting.

"Not now, Dad, PLEASE!"

(But it's too late.)

"Only one of the **BEST BANDS** in the whole world ever!" he says as he proudly shows Norman the record.



"This is a **CLASSIC**, you must listen to it ... right NOW!"

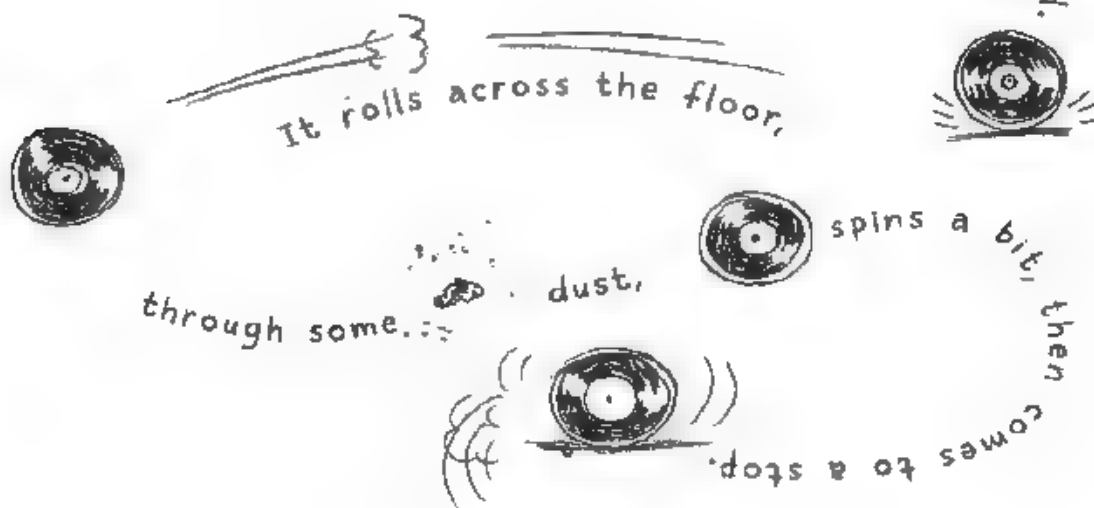
Norman says, "OK, sure!"

Then *jumps* up just a little bit too quickly to take a look at the album.





The record flies HIGH in the air, out of its sleeve, then lands on the ground.



It rolls across the floor, spins a bit, then comes to a stop. dust, through some...

Mr Fingle is  FREAKING  
out that his record has been  
 SCRATCHED and ruined.

"Don't PANIC,

I'll FETCH IT!" he shouts.

Really REALLY LOUDLY.

SO loudly that Rooster (Derek's dog)  
hears the word  and

 runs in from the

garden. He 'grabs' the record in his teeth,  
then disappears out of the door. Followed  
quickly by Mr Fingle.





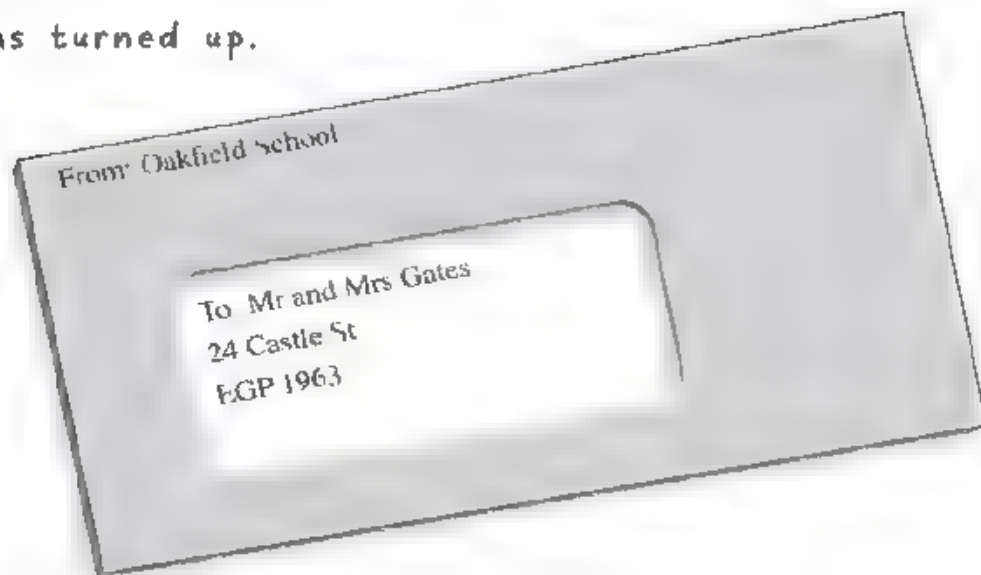
Derek says he's never seen his dad run so fast.

"It must be a really good album," Norman says.

"And Rooster has very good taste in music," I add.

The audition is over now, so we watch Mr Fingle chase Rooster all around the house.

When I get home,  
this letter from my school  
has turned up.



I'm wondering WHAT I've done NOW? So I open  
it carefully and take a sneaky look. ☹ ☹

~ ~ ~  
{PHEW!}  
~ ~ ~

Just a reminder about the  
school field trip and a  
special ➡ Clothes List.

(Nothing important, then.)



I'm  
LATE

for the field trip due to:

1. Forgetting about the field trip.

2. Forgetting I still had my pyjama bottoms on as I left for school.

I run back to get changed.



Delia sees me and is her usual helpful self.

FOOL.



I only just make it to school on time.

LATE  
AGAIN,  
TOM?



Mr Fullerman and the whole class are waiting for me outside. For some strange reason Mr Fullerman is dressed like a  
jungle explorer?

Solid is there and wearing very impressive waterproof boots.



I ask him if Mr Fullerman is looking for



BUGS or



TIGERS?

He laughs **loudly** and Mr Fullerman **STARES** at me ... then at my feet. (Uh oh.)



Apparently I'm wearing

**inappropriate footwear**



And I might have to wear the



**SPARE BOOTS!**



**(NOT the SPARE BOOTS.**

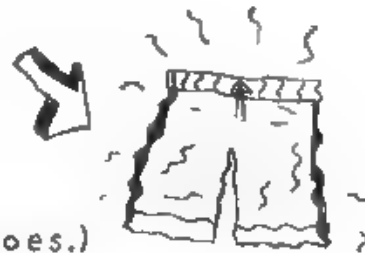
**No! No!)**

The "SPARE" stuff is mostly  
**MANKY** bits of lost property  
that no one wants (like this).



Spare T-shirt.

Spare shorts.



(I hope he forgets about my shoes.)

**MRS** Mumbie is on the trip with us. She's  
holding the bag of "spare stuff".

"For emergencies," she tells me cheerily.

"Or people with inappropriate footwear,"

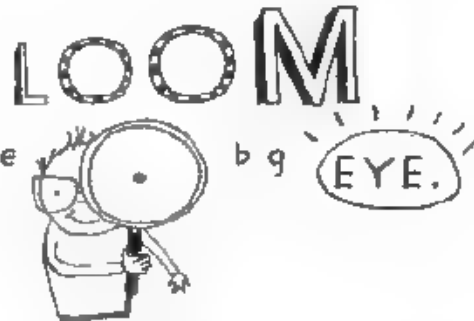
Marcus adds.

I ignore him.

**N**orman is still very overexcited about being  
in **DOGZOMBIES**.

He keeps jumping around and using his magnifying glass to

up to people with one  
(It's getting on  
everyone's nerves.)



Marcus is getting on my nerves.

"Didn't you read the field trip clothes list?"  
he asks me.



"SHHHHHH," I say.

It will be ALL Marcus's fault if I have to wear  
the



SPARE BOOTS.

Mr Fullerman gets distracted when Norman  
looms up to Julia Morton once too  
often.

AGH!



We all have to "PAY ATTENTION" to the safety talk about things that could

STING



and

BITE.



**"You must behave  
SENSIBLY."**

**NORMAN, THAT  
MEANS YOU TOO,**



Mr Fullerman says.

We set off with Mr Fullerman at the front  
and Mrs Mumble at the back to make sure no  
one dawdles behind.



We're not going far, just to the local field.

When we get there we are put into groups and have to go off and identify as many different types of plants, leaves and TREES as we can.

**"You should be good at this, Tom, you know a lot about trees,"** Mr Fullerman says.

Great, now my group think I'm some kind of WEIRD TREE EXPERT (I'm not).

Instead I just make stuff up, which seems to work.



Here we have the  
lesser spotted  
tree.

I'm really looking forward to using the BUG  
CATCHERS



we've been given.

Pansy Bennet has already found an



ENORMOUS

spider.

Leroy Lewis



is studying a bug that

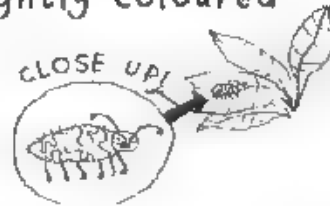
ROLLS up in  
a ball.

Mark Clump is catching EVERYTHING.



Ants, bugs, spiders, frogs - the lot.

I spot a really brightly coloured beetle. I've never seen one like that before.



I sneak up really slowly. **THIS** bug looks **AMAZING**, I might even get **THREE** merits (and one **GOLD** ★) for discovering it.

I lower my bug catcher over the bug carefully...

Easy does it...

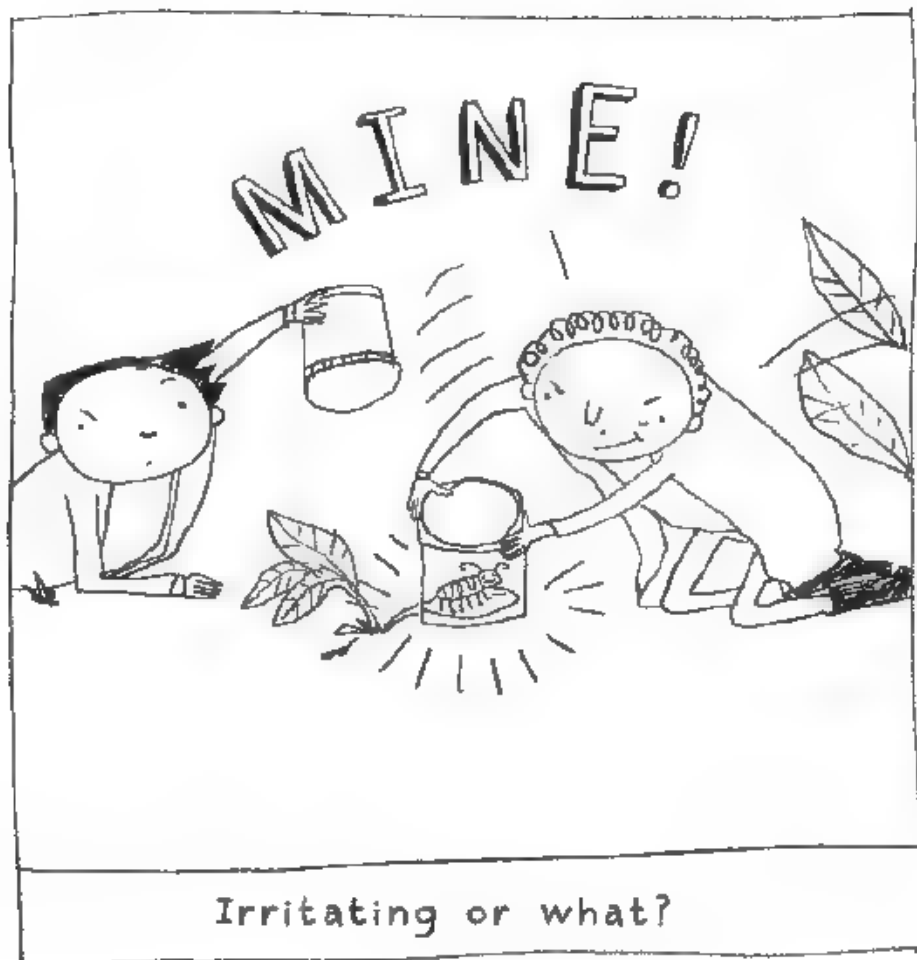
**SLAM!!!**

Marcus suddenly

traps it in HIS bug catcher.

"THAT'S MINE," he says.

(I really hope it bites him or stings him ... or both.)

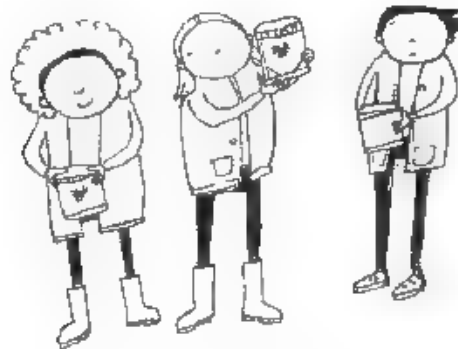


Irritating or what?

Florence and Amy come over  
to show me what they have found.

**GRASSHOPPERS,** which are very cool.

(It takes my mind off Marcus.)



Amy wonders how the audition  
went "w th ONLY Norman turning up?"



"He was **BRILLIANT**," I say.

"Really?" Florence doesn't sound convinced.

"**A**ren't you worried about **Norman** being in the band?" Amy asks.

"No, not really," I say.

"Norman can be a bit, you know..."

"**Bonkers,**"



Florence adds.

So I tell them.



"You'd be surprised. Norman's actually a **REALLY GREAT** drummer."



"**W**hat about all the crazy things he does?" Amy says.

"Norman's not **THAT** bad. Honestly, when was the last time you saw him do something **REALLY** silly?" I add.

Just as Norman turns up holding

TWO green caterpillars

under his nose.


"LOOK ...

BOGEYS!"



(Not now, Norman ... groan.)

We are sitting on the grass eating our packed lunches when **SOLID** (who looks a bit miserable) shows me the only thing he's found so far.

I think  it's half a dead bug ..  
it is half a dead bug.



"I'll help you find something else,"  
I say.

So Solid **FLICKS**  the dead bug away.

(Which probably wasn't the best idea.)

The bug flies through the air and lands right on Julia

Julia  SCREAMS and  
says she feels sick now.



Mrs Mumble assures her that  
the bug probably fell from  
the tree.

(Me and Solid keep quiet.)



Unlike MARCUS, who tells Julia that there is a very good reason she has only HALF a dead bug on her sandwich.

"What's that, then?" Julia asks. 

"You must have **EATEN** the other half already." 

The whole class go "UGGGGGHHHHHHHHh!"

Julia turns green. (She's the same colour as the grass now.)



Marcus is laughing and being particularly irritating today.




**Mr Fullerman** tells everyone to  
**"Calm down!"**


He lets Julia "recover" by sitting  
under a tree. Then takes the rest of  
the class down to the pond to carry on looking  
for creatures.



OK, now I see why I needed to wear boots.  SOLID has already

 SUNK down into the **mud**



and has to be pulled out by Mrs Mumble. (Who's a LOT stronger than she looks.) 

Mrs Mumble tells me to keep clear of the **mud** "in those shoes"


Then Marcus adds





"He should be wearing the

 **SPARE BOOTS,** 


Mrs Mumble."

SHUT UP, MARCUS! I wish he'd sink down in the mud. 

Mr Fullerman calls us all over to see what he's been collecting in the bucket. Amongst all the **SLIME** and WEEDS  are some tiny little  and other interesting things.


● ●  
**"Take turns to look ... don't push,"**

Mr Fullerman says.

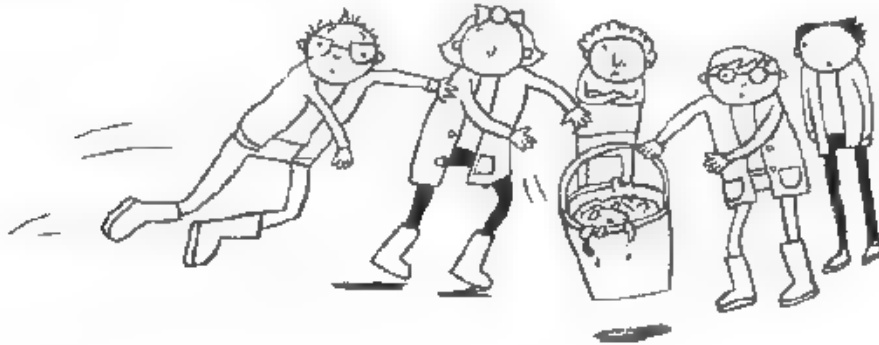
 (Marcus is pushing now.) It's tricky to see exactly what's in there. **SOLID** thinks he

saw a  "WATER SNAKE!"

**"You can all see ... be patient,"** Mr Fullerman tells us.

Then he asks Mark Clump and Amber Tulley Green to help carry the bucket up the grass. 

Norman's **not** great at being patient and can't wait. He hears Solid say "WATER SNAKE" and gets really excited. Then accidentally *TRIPS* over a twig and falls on Amber.



Who lets go of the bucket.

Mark Clump holds on with one hand.

Until a BIG FROG



**POPS** out  
of his pocket.  
(He'd forgotten  
about the frog.)



It

LEAPS OUT=

and Mark tries to catch it (again).

Rivvett!

Mark lets go of the bucket.

The bucket goes FLYING UP in the air

and all the tiny



fish,



weeds and



slime

spill out

EVERYWHERE.



ALL OVER **MARCUS.**



(Turns out there wasn't a water snake in the bucket after all. Just lots and lots of slime.) Marcus is not happy. Solid has cheered up, though. Mrs Mumble comes to the rescue with a towel. She says:

"Don't panic, I've got just the thing for this kind of



Mr Fulerman and the rest of the class scoop up any fish or creatures from the ground and take them back to the pond, while Mrs Mumble helps Marcus.

She says...



"Thank GOODNESS we brought the SPARE CLOTHES ..

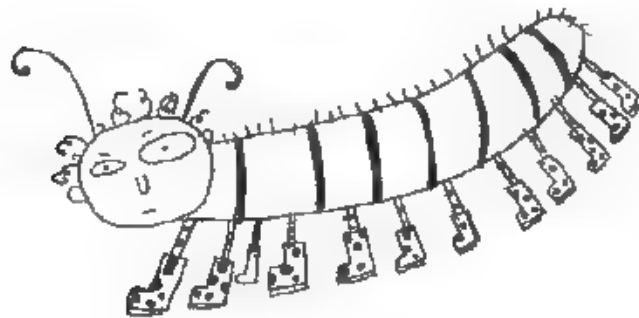


and the SPARE BOOTS!"

(I agree. 😊)

**M**arcus has to wear them all the way back

to school. Which **inspires** me to draw  
some of the bugs and creatures I COULD HAVE  
found on the field trip.



Worth at least five merits, I think?



Everyone's coming to our house for Dad's birthday party, which means Mum is a LOT more stressed than usual. She keeps saying things like



"Take it upstairs!" and  
"Rubbish outside!"

Delia thinks it's funny to try and put ME outside.

Mum gets **CROSS**



and says that we had BOTH better behave  
when guests arrive



The whole house is all

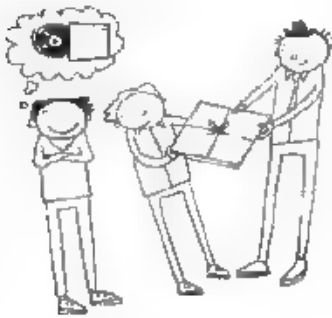
\* **CLEAN** and **TIDY** \*

Until the Fingles turn up early  
with their dog Rooster.  
He's got really muddy paws.



Rooster isn't in the house  
for very long thanks to  
Mum.


Derek gives Dad his present. (I can guess what it is from its shape.) 😊



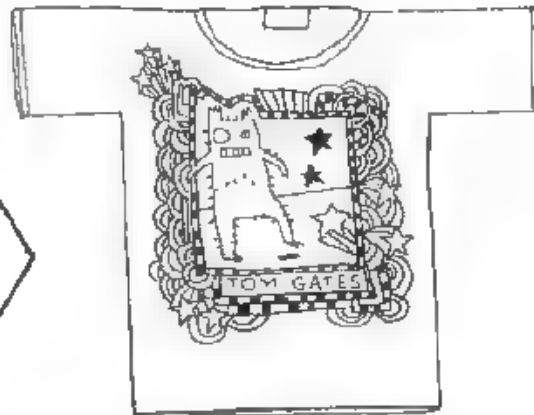
Dad's DELIGHTED. He's already discussing with Mr Fingle "classic albums" and "great bands of our day".

(Yawn.)



I give Dad my  present before he gets too carried away chatting.

It's a T-shirt with my drawing on the front.



Dad  LOVES it!

He says I've gone to a  LOT of trouble.

Actually it was Mum who put it on a T-shirt.

But I'm happy to take the praise.

Thank you. Thank you.

Dad wants to wear it straight away.

"IT FITS..."  Mum says because she thought it might be a bit snug.

(Which doesn't go down well with Dad.)

Derek says that **DOGZOMBIES** should have T-shirts too. Which is an

EXCELLENT idea.

When Uncle Kevin, Aunty Alice and the cousins turn up, they are all wearing

**VERY** *fancy* clothes.



Dad wonders if they are going to another party afterwards?

Uncle Kevin says, "It's important to make an effort when you're invited out."

(He's looking at Dad like he's a bit scruffy.)

So Dad tells him that I made the T-shirt as a present.

"Tom's so talented, isn't it great?"

Which makes Delia do "I'm going to be sick" signs behind Dad's back.

I ignore her and **AGREE** with Dad, that I am a GENIUS ... it's true.

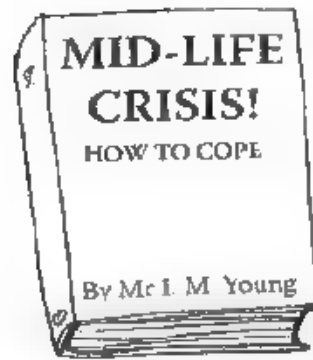
**U**ncle Kevin says, "Well done, Tom."

And Dad's happy ...

... until Aunty Alice gives him the r present.

It's a book called

Uncle Kevin says,



"We saw this and  
thought of you."

Aunty Alice adds, "It was recommended for men  
of your age."

Dad says "Thanks!" but he doesn't look

**THAT** pleased.





**THE FROBIE** arrive in their usual

**STYLE**

has brought one of her cakes  
(well, I think it's a cake; you  
never know with Granny).

I'm guessing Delia **FORGOT**  
to buy Dad a present.

Because she's just given him ...  
a pair of her **OLD**  
sunglasses?

Granny



cake



Dad puts them on and says, "Thanks, Delia, I  
look **JUST** like you now!"



Which is not really true  
because Dad is SMILING.

Mum tells me I have to



look after Derek and  
your cousins

(this means "keep out of trouble").



Everything's going well  
until all the good snacks  
run out.



Then the cousins announce that

they have brought over



so we can **ALL** finish watching it. ○ ○

"Let's watch it **NOW**,"

they say.

(Let's not.)



Derek looks keen to see it but I want to avoid  
hiding behind cushions **AGAIN**.



QUICKLY I suggest, "We  
should play a few jokes  
instead."

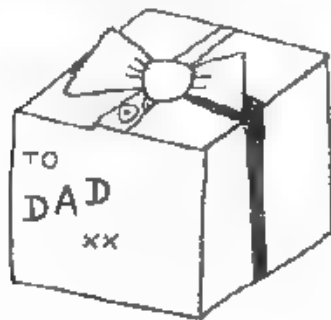
Which turns out to be a **BRILLIANT IDEA**.



The whoopee cushion  
works well  
on Delia.  
And Auntie  
Alice too.



Putting me inside a **LARGE** box as an  
"EXTRA present" for Dad was **INSPIRED**.



I **SPRING** out shouting

Dad laughs but Uncle  
Kevin's not smiling much,  
because I've accidentally



knocked a bowl of crisps all over his  
fancy bow tie.



Mum AND Uncle Kevin are GLARING at



me. **W**hen Granny comes to my rescue by  
bringing in Dad's birthday cake.



...Which is slightly  
unusual?






"It's a delicious  
vegetable  
cake," she says.


(Mmmm it doesn't look so delicious to me?)

We all sing "HAPPY BIRTHDAY" to Dad. 

(This is my version that I made up.)

 "Happy birthday to you  
You're a hundred and two  
You've lost all your hair now   
and your teeth are brand new!" 

Dad blows out his candles and calls me a "cheeky monkey".

Uncle Kevin jokes that if we run out of breath we might need a fire extinguisher for all those candles.   
Ha. Ha.



The cousins tuck into the cake first. (No surprise there.)  
It **MUST** taste better than it looks.

**T**hen Granddad wants to REMIND us that

**DOGZOMBIES** are playing our

VERY  first gig on Sunday...



**WE ARE?**

"This Sunday?

That's a bit soon, isn't it?" I say.

Granddad says it's all booked. So we'd better get practising. Which is a good point because we still only know a few songs.

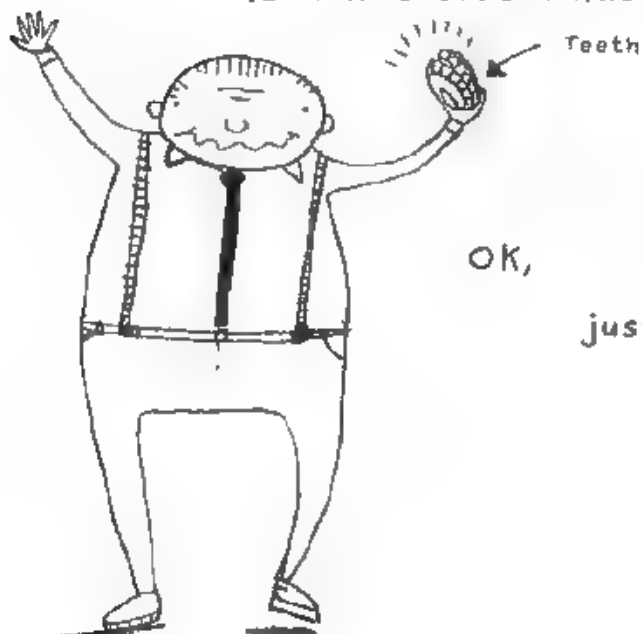
"**B**esides, if you don't come and play,  
I'll be **FORCED** to entertain everyone with  
my **ONE** **VERY** special party trick,"  
Granddad tells us.

Derek wants to know what



his *Party Trick* **actually** is.

(I'm not sure what it is either.)



OK,

just remembered.

Meanwhile... The cousins **STILL** want me to see the film. 

(I'd rather watch Granddad take his teeth out again.) But it's too late, they are sitting in front of the TV waiting for me to join them.

MYSTERIOUSLY ... the remote control goes **MISSING.**



(I've hidden it.)



I tell them that the TV is **STUCK** on this channel. Which is showing a programme on ... **VAMPIRES.** (That's lucky.)



I leave them to it. The cousins are **VERY** happy until Aunty Alice and Uncle Kevin come to take them home.

Which turns out to be a **lot** sooner



than expected due to Uncle Kevin



hurting his back. "I knew dancing was a mistake," he says.

Dad says Uncle Kevin is

no spring  
chicken.

Not like the

**FOSSILS**,

who are



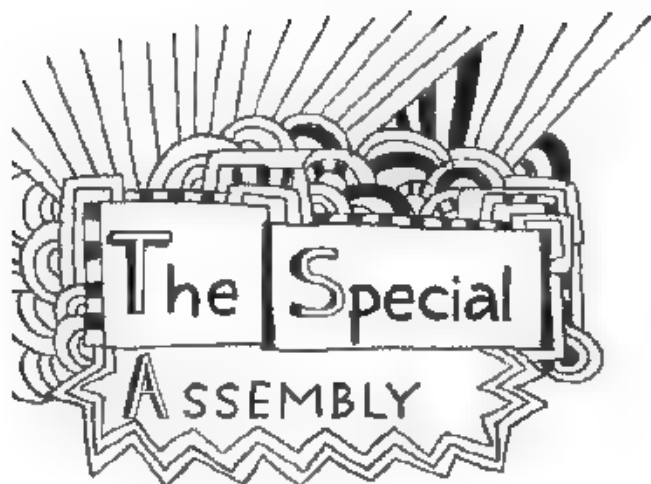
having a great time making everyone join in their CONGA line. They dance all around the house and into the garden too. It's slightly embarrassing (but fun).

At least Dad looks like he's enjoying himself this year.



Unlike Delia.





Get this...

Derek is off school today because he's

sprained his ankle



doing that stupid conga.



I have to go in on my own, which is FINE until I get to school and overhear Mr Keen talking to Mr Fullerman about the

**SPECIAL ASSEMBLY.**

**OH! NO!** What with



Dad's birthday and everything, I have completely forgotten all about the *special assembly* and playing in the school band!

(DEREK picked a 'good' day for a dodgy ankle.)

I'm trying to avoid Mr Keen AGAIN, until I can think of an **EXCELLENT** excuse to get myself OUT of this sticky situation. It's bad enough playing "instruments" (bottles with chopsticks).



But doing it without

Derek will be **too** embarrassing for me.

What to do?

I walk very SLOWLY into class to give myself time to think.



Marcus is walking in front of me. He starts LIMPING when he sees me.



"The dog bite scar?"

Marcus says. "It still hurts." This gives **me** an idea. 😊

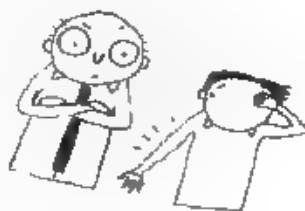
(Thanks, Marcus, for a change.)

# DISASTER!

DOWN with a terrible

DEAD  
ARM  
ache...

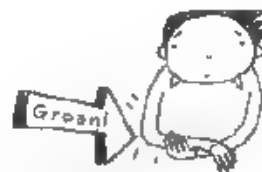
I am STRUCK



Mr Fullerman wonders how this could have happened **SO** suddenly?

I explain how my older sister DELIA pushed me out of the house and how **she** MUST have sprained my "instrument-playing arm **VERY** badly".

"It's **AGONY**," I say.



I do some extra **VERY LOUD** groaning during registration, which I think helps. Mr Fullerman sends me to the medical room - again.

I moan a bit more (OK, a lot more, for extra effect on the way out).



Mrs Mumble tells me to sit in the medical room and wait for a bit.



Medical Room

# UNFORTUNATELY

I miss ALL of the special assembly and  
playing in the school band too.

RESULT!

Once everything is safely over, I make a remarkable recovery.

My arm is fine now

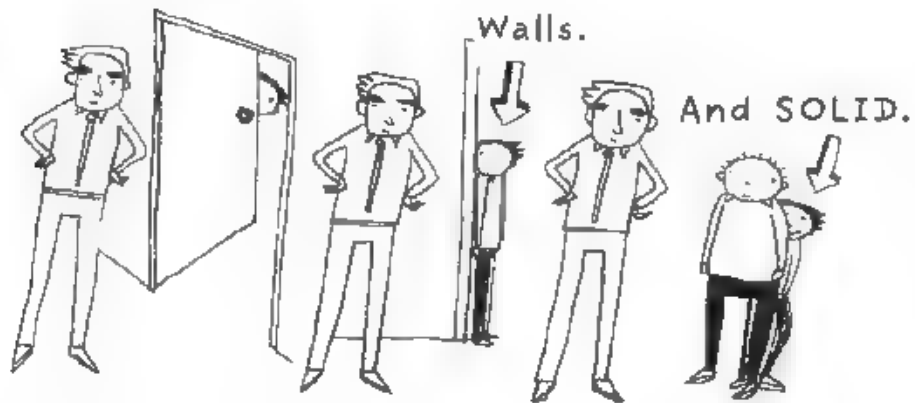
.. See. ➡

It's safe to go back to class.



I just have to avoid Mr Keen for the rest of the day, which I manage to do with the help of:

Doors.



I can't avoid Mr Fullerman, though. He calls me over for a **"quick chat"**. (I think he's slightly suspicious about my instant recovery from arm ache.)



**M**r Fullerman says,  
"Such a shame you missed the special  
assembly, Tom."

(Not really.)



"Glad your arm is better ... so quickly,  
too?"

(Uh oh.)



**I** tell Mr **F**ullerman my arm feels absolutely  
**FINE** now. And **THAT'S** when I notice

the  book under Mr Fullerman's arm.

**IT**'s a book on  
**TREES.** 

(Which looks **VERY** familiar?)

Mr Fullerman hands me back my  
**REVIEW** HOMEWORK.  
The one I did so quickly.

About TREES...

It's all coming back  
to me now ... whoops.



Tom

Imagine my surprise when I came across this book on TREES ... and realized I had read the back somewhere before?

Your REVIEW HOMEWORK on trees, Tom.

No more copying.

I want a new review done quickly or another letter goes home to your parents ... again.

Mr Fullerman

Point taken.



### **TREES:**

This book aims to give you many interesting facts on trees. From where the largest tree in the world is, to how much food and shelter a tree can provide for wildlife

Did you know that trees are the longest-living organisms on earth?

And that one acre of trees takes away nearly 2.6 tons of carbon dioxide each year?

The world's oldest trees are thought to be 4,600-year-old BRISTLECONE pines that are in the USA. There are so many benefits that trees bring to our cities and many communities. They provide beauty and shade. Trees can make you feel serene and peaceful.

I hope the information in this book will inspire you to enjoy trees and plant more of them

**By A. Corn**

# BAD NEWS ⚡★



Mr Fullerman has REMOVED one of my **GOLD STARS**★ from my chart until I hand in the new piece of review homework. **"LAST CHANCE, Tom,"** he tells me. I can see that Marcus has a **LOT** more gold stars than I do. Which is annoying.

Mr Fullerman even gave him a gold star for **"collecting an unusual beetle"**.

Which was **REALLY** irritating because I saw ☹️☹️ it first!



But he's **WAY** ahead of the whole class, even Amy. How's that happened?

Marcus is a sneaky so and so. Which makes me wonder if he's been



On the way home, I am discussing my suspicions about Marcus with Derek, who wants to get some fruit chews from the shop.




And guess who's already there?

→  ↖ **MARCUS.**

We say "Hi" but he's too busy looking for something ... and it's **NOT** sweets.



Derek picks out a few fruit chews  while I read this week's copy of **ROCK WEEKLY** (I'm off sweets due to my dodgy tooth  ... for now).

When we leave the shop I notice that **MARCUS** is standing in the section that has paper, envelopes  and ... stickers.

"That's odd," I say to Derek as we leave the shop.

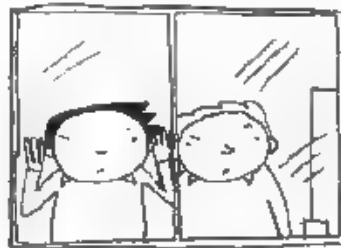
"I wonder what Marcus was buying?"

He's DEFINITELY up to something.

So we decide to take a peek through the shop window.

Sure enough...

There's Marcus  
buying what looks  
like a very



LARGE  of GOLD STAR  
STICKERS 

I knew it! Marcus has been adding his own stars to the chart. Catching him out won't be easy, though. I will need VERY BEADY EYES like Mr Fullerman's.





Norman  has come  
round for  LAST band

practise before our first gig. I tell him ALL  
about Marcus buying his own gold star  
stickers and CHEATING!

Norman thinks it's a   
(No, Norman, it's a bad idea ... sigh.)

We HAVE to learn  more song and  
practise the others.

Derek's dad keeps popping in and finding

excuses to come and see us rehearse.

Everything OK?

Even though we have **ALL** learnt

**NOT** to 'CHAT' to Mr Fingle about music



(unless you have **TEN HOURS** ☹ ☹  
to spare), right now we **NEED** his help.

Derek asks if he could suggest a good song for  
us to learn ... today?

"Leave it to me, lads..."

(He's VERY excited.) He takes  
out a Deep Purple record.

Another  
CLASSIC and  
perfect for  
you.



We work hard w th Mr Fingle's help.

So **DOGZOMBIES** (that's us) have managed to add



to our gig list.

RESULT!

Norman already knows how to play it and me and Derek try our best. The singing is tricky, especially when Mr Fingle keeps joining in.



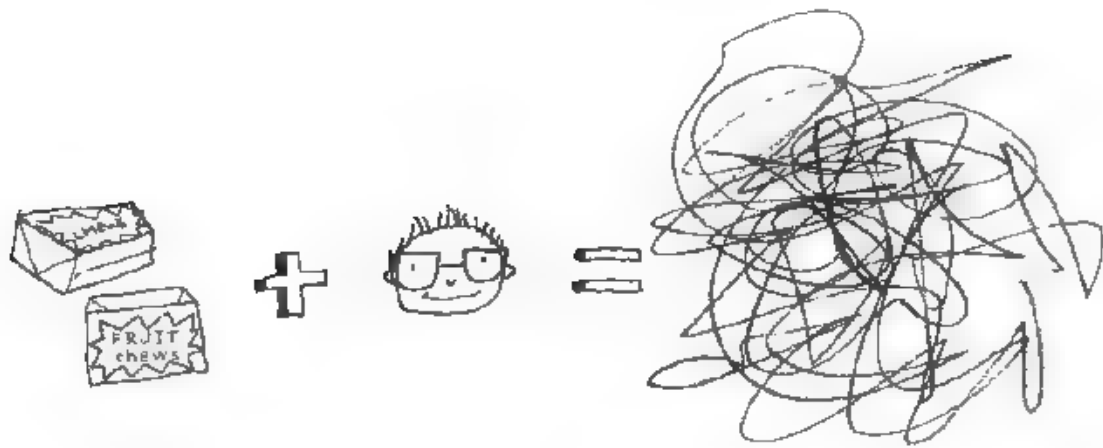
**L**et's hope we've done enough to keep Granddad's teeth **FIRMLY** in his mouth on Sunday.

**N**ow we've finished practising, Derek is looking for the last of the fruit chews he saved as a treat. But he can't find them anywhere. I haven't eaten them.

But I think I know who has...



It's a warning to us that





# BRILLIANT NEWS!

Delia's boyfriend  has actually lent me

a REAL **ELECTRIC**  guitar

and  amp so I can play

REALLY **LOUDLY!** 

From the look on Delia's face, it's all working fine.

Dad says he's coming along as our



"ROADIE" to help set everything up. He's taking it all very seriously

(and he's made a long list).



DOGZOMBIES

BANNER ✓

BAND ✓

INSTRUMENTS ✓

POSTERS ✓

EARPLUGS ✓

DRINKS ✓

Mum is busy with her camera.



While we have our first **BAND PHOTO** done,



Dad keeps doing  
embarrassing rock-star poses.

Me and Derek are a bit nervous.

Norman is always so jumpy that you can't  
tell if he is or not.

I have a lucky escape when Mum tries to  
**HUG** me and wishes the band  
good luck.



**D**elia is her usual charming self.

You still  
here?



**D**ad has packed the car and stuffed the roof rack. Then we're off to meet Granddad. It's only when we're driving that I realize...


We have **NO** idea where **exactly** we're playing our first gig.

**D**ad says it will be a NICE **BIG**



for us!




"LEAFY GREEN OLD  
FOLKS' HOME ... ?"  I say.

Granddad says they'll **LOVE** us.

"I have 'lots' of friends here who are  
looking     forward to seeing you!"

**REALLY?**

"And it won't matter how loud  you play or  
if you make any mistakes because MOST of the  
audience are a bit hard of hearing. Just have  
some fun!"

Great. I'm wondering just how much "fun"  
the old folk are really going to have listening  
to us?



Granddad has put up **LOTS** of posters around the home already. He's now telling everyone that I'm his grandson and that **DOGZOMBIES** are going to be

THE NEXT BIG THING.



So they must come and see us.

(Thanks, Granddad.)

**W**e have to wait for the lounge to be **FREE** before we can set up.

**A**nd I manage to avoid a potential disaster by keeping Norman away from the tray of biscuits. PHEW!



**W**e've got quite a crowd now, but it takes a while for the old folk to get settled and comfy.

When Granddad introduces us, he says,



"Can you all hear me back there?"

Which sets off everyone saying

"Pardon?" "Eh?" "Pardon?"

Never mind, we can play loudly.

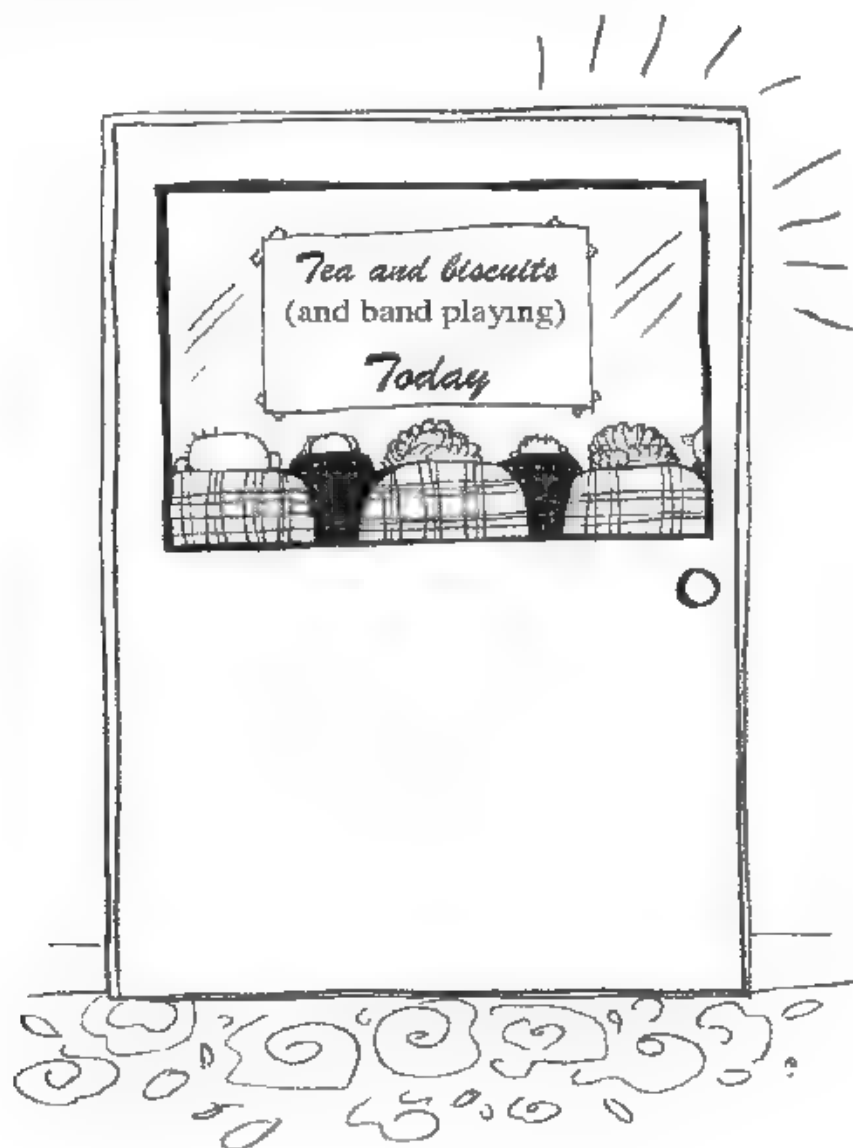
Then Granddad says, "Let's give  
a WARM LEAFY GREEN welcome to the

amazing ...

**DOGZOMBIES**

**A**nd it's over to us to start with a rousing  
edition of "Delia's a Weirdo"

(which seems to all go down well).



Our first-ever gig was ... OK. Not brilliant ... just OK. (Room for improvement.) We made a few mistakes, but no one seemed to notice.



All in all, we had a good time, Norman didn't go too wild and Granddad's teeth stayed firmly in place the whole time, which is a good sign, I think? And I heard a few people singing

*Delia's a WEIRDO.*

when we left.

**Result!** ☺



Granddad says there are a lot of other old folks' homes we could play. "Everyone has to start somewhere!" he reminds us.

True.

(I wonder where **DUDE3** played their first gig?)

Back at home  I'm reading

Delia's copy of **ROCK WEEKLY**



and imagining that

**DOGZOMBIES** are being

interviewed by the magazine about the success  
of their first-ever gig (and other important  
music matters).

## **OLDIES ROCK OUT TO DOGZOMBIES' FIRST GIG!**

**Rock Weekly:** So, Tom, who are your INFLUENCES for DOGZOMBIES?

**Tom:** That's a very good question. All sorts of things, really. DUDE3 are a huge influence. And I'm often inspired to write songs by VERY irritating family members.

**RW:** "Delia's a Weirdo"?

**Tom:** I couldn't have said it better myself...

**RW:** Why did you play your first gig at an old folks' home? It's an interesting choice.

**Tom:** Old folk like good music too. What can I say, we have a growing grey fan base who are spreading the DOGZOMBIE word!

**RW:** What's in the future for DOGZOMBIES?

**Tom:** World domination, I think, and a sponsorship deal with a delicious biscuit company would be nice?

*Delia rudely interrupts me.*

Are you pretending to be interviewed?

"No," I say unconvincingly.



You are!  
SADDO.  
ha! ha!



Then she takes back her copy of  
**ROCK WEEKLY** and goes off

**LAUGHING!**

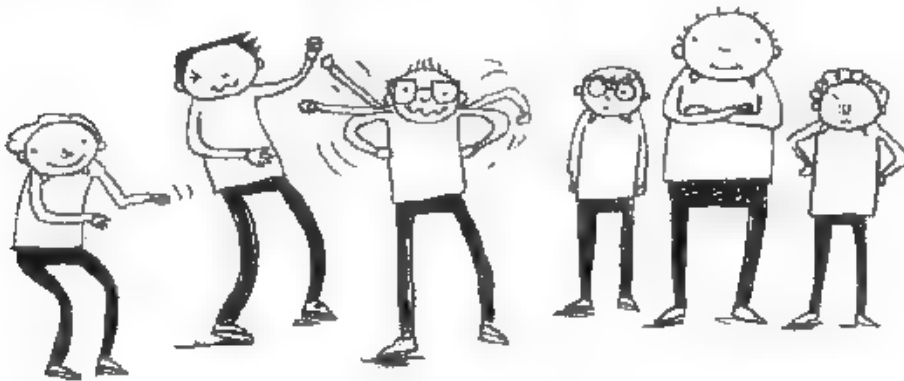
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

I think the next song I write will be called

“**M**y Sister is an **IDIOT**”.

I have lots of ideas already.

**F**resh from our **SUCCESSFUL** first-ever gig, me, Derek and Norman are reliving the **WHOLE** event in school.



I say, "There were **loads** of people all cheering and clapping."

Which is ***SORT*** of true. 😊

I don't mention it was at the **LEAFY GREEN**  
**OLD FOLKS' HOME** either.

In class, everyone is settling down when Mrs Mumble makes an announcement over the tannoy.



WILL TOM GATES AND  
Norman Watson and Derek  
Fingle come to the school office  
TO SEE MR FULLERMAN ...

Mr Fullerman is  
looking at me with his "what  
have you been up to now?"  
stare as we leave.



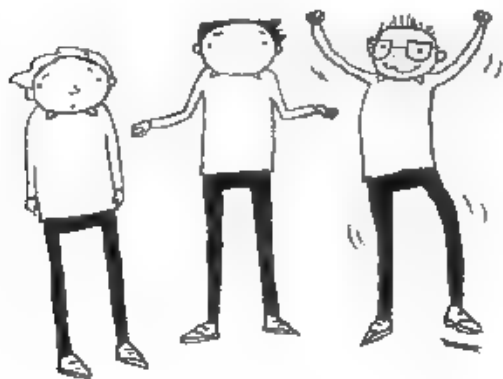
Derek is already waiting outside the school office.

"What do you think Mr Keen wants?" he asks me.

"Who knows ... whatever it is, we're innocent," I say.

Norman's just happy to be out of lessons.

YEAH!



Turns out that Mr Keen has had a phone call from the owner of the LEAFY GREEN OLD FOLKS' HOME saying

how impressed they were with the band. Apparently we're



"a credit to the school".

**"Well done, all three of you,"**



Mr Keen says.

Then he goes and **SPOILS**  
EVERYTHING by telling us,

**"You'll be even better in the school  
band now!"**



Mr Sprocket is running a special  
school band practice this lunchtime.

**"I'll be showing some new parents  
around the school. It will be VERY  
impressive for them to see the band  
in action. Isn't that a good idea?"**






(Eeeeeerrrrr, **NO!**)



**NOT** the school band again.

**M**r. **K**een is DETERMINED to put us in the school band!



**W**HY? Looking at Derek I can see he's not wild about the idea.    
(Especially after last time.)

**N**orman doesn't seem to care because he's just spotted a spider walking up the wall. 



I'm trying to think of YET another excuse to get OUT of this situation.  
(Think! Mmmm ... mmmmm... Think! Mmmmmm...)  
All kinds of deas are going through my head.

Then it comes to me in a

  
 **F L A S H!**

"Mr Keen," I say.

**"Yes, Tom."**

"Would you mind if we **DIDN'T** play in the school band? We were SO RUBBISH at playing the recycled instruments last time. It was terrible. Everyone thought so."



**"Oh ... are you all sure?"**

Mr Keen asks.

"Very," I say.

**D**erek and **N**orman are nodding too.

**PHEW!**



Look of relief

WHY didn't I think of saying that before?

And just like that, it's all sorted.

No more school band.

**WRONG!**



**INSTEAD...**

Mr Keen says that



can play a special gig  
in front of the

**WHOLE ENTIRE**

**SCHOOL.**

**"Just like you did for the  
LEAFY GREEN OLD FOLKS' HOME.**

**So well done Tom for suggesting  
that," he adds.**



(I didn't ... groan.)

On the way back to class I tell Derek and Norman it will all be fine because Mr Keen will probably forget about it. (He won't.)

"We're not ready to play in front of the school yet," I say.

We all agree on that.

**B**ack in class.

I'm hoping Mr Fullerman might have heard the news that Mr Keen was VERY pleased with us (for a change). I might even get a bit of PRAISE?

No, nothing yet. Oh well.

I get ready to join in the "class reading", which is a nice and easy lesson.

I've even remembered to sneak a copy of **ROCK WEEKLY** into my reading book just in case things gets a bit dull. (Emergency reading, I call it.)



But Mr Fullerman says I'm EXCUSED from class reading today because I still haven't given in my REVIEW HOMEWORK.

**"Have you, TOM?"**

And if I don't finish it **NOW** I will have to do it at lunch time in the library, with Miss Page keeping an eye on me.

**"You don't want ANOTHER letter home, do you, Tom?"**



"No, Mr Fullerman."

"And no copying books on trees."



Groan.

Marcus is sniggering next to me. He says, "No gold stars for cheating", which is irritating.

OK. I'll do a REVIEW of **DOGZOMBIES**' first gig. It's fresh in my memory and shouldn't take long. I'll get it done before lunch. I don't want to be stuck in the library, after all.

In the library  
I'm still finishing off  
my homework.



I can hear people laughing and  
PLAYING outside and the school band practising  
in the hall. Miss Page →  s keeping  
an EYE  on me and a couple of  
other kids too.

(At least I'm not in the school band any more  
... that's something.)

I'm hoping this review homework will be worth

SIX MERITS  and 3  gold stars

**B**ecause right now Marcus is **STILL** in  
the **lead** on the **CHART**. Although I'm  
convinced he's been

**CHEATING**,   Cheat?  
I can't prove it, which is annoying.

**S**o I'm trying to get the last bit of my  
homework finished when I glance up and stare  
out of the window. I notice something a bit  
**ODD**.

From where I'm sitting  in the library,  
I can see  **RIGHT INTO** our  
**CLASSROOM. SOMEONE** is in there.

It doesn't look like Mr Fullerman, Mr Keen or  
any of the teachers.

I can't see who it is. So I keep watching.

I STAND UP

for a closer look.



Just when they duck down



under the desks.

Which is **VERY** suspicious.

The school band are still playing, so it can't be  
any of them (or Mr Sprocket).

Whoever it is has curly hair. I can see the top  
of their head moving closer

and closer

and closer

towards

# THE GOLD STAR AWARD CHART

I knew it!



This could be my chance to catch  
a very sneaky

CHEAT. ☹️

Smug



I ask Miss Page if I can leave.



"Because Mr Fullerman  
wants to check my  
FINISHED REVIEW

HOMEWORK himself."  
(Good thinking.)



Then I do super *FAST*  
walking to get to the classroom.

I'm SO nearly there when I



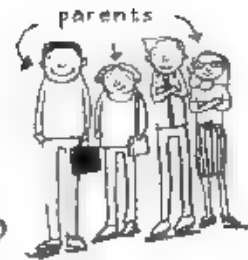
right into Mr Keen.  
Who is busy showing  
the new parents  
around the school.

He asks me what I'm doing in school at lunch  
time?

I say **EXTRA** studying

(which is sort of true).

Then Mr Keen tells the parents  
**ALL** about **DOGZOMBIES**  
and how we played at the  
LEAFY GREEN OLD  
FOLKS' HOME.



(He's going on a bit. Blah ... blah blah...)  
I'm **DESPERATE** to get to the classroom!  
Then just when I think he's finished chatting...

Mr Fullerman turns up!



And **HE** starts talking to the  
parents about "**the school  
field trip**" and what kind of work we do in  
class.

**BLAH BLAH BLAH!**

**A**<sub>nd</sub> **ALL THE TIME**

I'm  thinking about who's in the

classroom **ADDING** the **GOLD STARS** to

the **CHART** !

When one of the **PARENTS** asks me,

What do **YOU** like  
about your school,  
Tom?



And **THAT'S**

when I get one of my **TOTAL**



I say...

"I really like the

## GOLD STAR AWARD CHART

because it encourages 😊 you to do well  
in class."



(Superb answer.)

"Sounds interesting," they say.

"How does it work?"

Then



Mr Keen suggests I  
might like to show them in my  
classroom.



And I say, "That's an EXCELLENT 😊  
idea, follow me."



Walking to the classroom I explain to the parents how we **EARN** merits for good work. And **TWO MERITS** equals

**ONE GOLD STAR** 

And the **ONLY** person who is allowed to give out the gold stars is

**MR FULLERMAN.** 

"You are **DEFINITELY NOT** allowed to stick the stars on yourself,




are you,  
Mr Fullerman?"  
I say.

**"No, Tom, that's my job. And I hand out prizes at the end of term to whoever has the most gold stars."**



We're nearly outside the classroom now.

So I say,

"If Mr Fullerman **EVER** caught someone adding their **OWN** stars  to the chart, that would be cheating, wouldn't it, Mr Fullerman?"

**"Yes, Tom, it would be,"** he says.

Then I **OPEN** the classroom door, and just as I suspected...



There's Marcus Meldrew with a whole packet of  
his own gold stars.

(He's SO busted.)



★ **GOLD STAR AWARD CHART** ★  
★ CLASS 5F ★

MARK CLUMP

ROSS WHITE

BRAD GALLOWAY

SOLOMAN STEWART

TOM GATES

PANSY BENNET

PAUL JOLLY

INDRANI HINDLE

LEROY LEWIS

FLORENCE MITCHELL

MAZEUS MELDREW

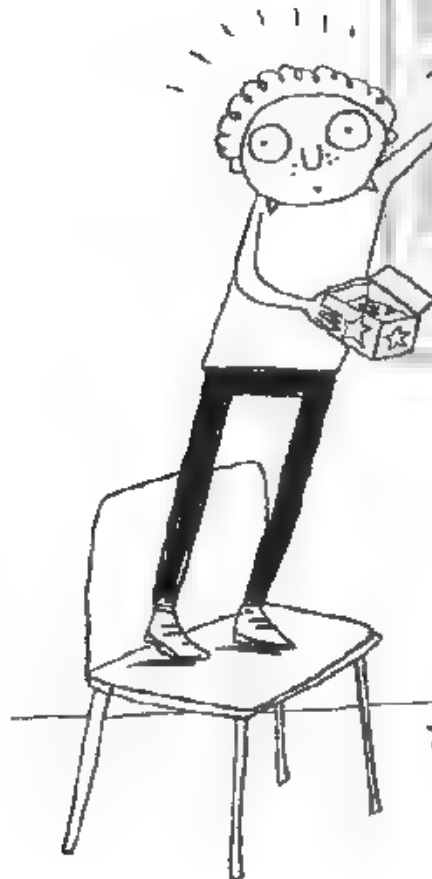
JULIA MORTON

TREVOR PETERS

AMY PORTER

NORMAN WATSON

AMBER TULLEY GREEN



Dear Mr and Mrs Meldrew

I am very disappointed to tell you that Marcus has been caught adding his own stars to the GOLD STAR AWARD CHART. In other words, he's been caught cheating.

Marcus will be missing playtimes for the next three days and helping Miss Page in the library as a punishment.

Along with writing an apology letter to me.

I hope Marcus has learnt his lesson, as he is capable of earning his own stars without cheating.

Kind regards


**Mr Fullerman**

Class 5F Form Tutor

Due to Marcus **CHEATING** ...  
his stars have been removed.

So now I'm  only **TWO STARS AWAY**  
from **AMY PORTER** (who's in the lead).

I need to get four merits (or more) for my  
REVIEW HOMEWORK on the  
**DOGZOMBIES** gig.

Mr Fullerman has been taking **AGES**   
to mark my work.  
When he does give it back to me he says  
there's been a bit of a problem.

**WHAT NOW?**



Sorry, Tom.

I had a bit of an accident with  
my coffee!

Luckily it missed your  
homework and I was able to  
read and mark it finally.

Please make sure you do  
homework on time in future?

Mr Fullerman



REVIEW HOMEWORK AGAIN.  
(For the ~~SECOND~~ THIRD TIME)

By Tom Gates.

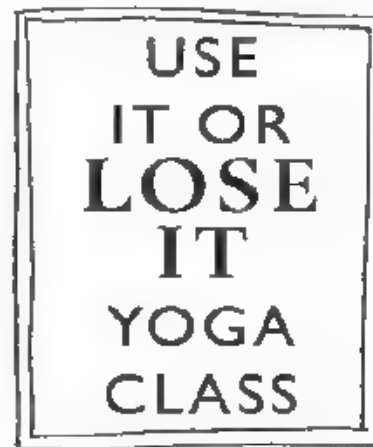
If I was the lead singer of **DUDE 3** I  might be a tiny bit disappointed  finding out the venue for the gig was THE LEAFY GREEN OLD FOLKS' HOME. But for **DOGZOMBIES**' first gig it was excellent.

My granddad **BOB**   arranged it all (thanks, Granddad).

  
We had to carry a **LOT** of stuff into the home to set up.

**W**e | ... when I say "WE", I mean my dad,  
who was our roadie for the day.

Before we could get started we had to  
wait for the



to finish.

**T**hen **D**ad wasn't allowed to use the  
**BIG** hammer he brought to put up our




STOP!



banner.

Luckily the surgical tape  
worked just as well.



Granddad said, 

"Everyone who lives here is coming to see you  
because they are all

**DOGZOMBIES** 

But I'm not so sure that's true. Because outside  
there was a sign that said tea and biscuits and  
band playing.



I managed to STOP  
Norman from eating any  
biscuits before the gig  
started in case he went



**WILD**

(again).

It took a **LONG** time for everyone to get seated and comfortable.



And even **l o n g e r** for us to start playing.

This was mostly because:

1. **I** completely forgot what song we were starting with.



And we had to start again twice.

2. **N**orman accidentally knocked over a cymbal,  which made a



**MASSIVE  
CRASH.**

3. Some of the OLD FOLK got a BIT of a

SHOCK



from the noise  
and needed a top-up of tea and a biscuit  
to calm down.



4. Vera in the second row couldn't see



properly because Alfie's head  
was in the way. So Dad had  
to help Vera to a better seat.

5. Finally ... we were just about to get  
started when FRED wanted to



know why we were called

**DOGZOMBIES.**

Which was a good question and took a bit of explaining.

EVENTUALLY ... we did start playing. "Delia's a WEIRDO" went down well. So did "**WILD THING**".

But the best song of all was "SMOKE ON THE WATER".

Because everyone joined in by tapping the sides of their teacups in time with the music.



The whole GIG went SO well that at the end we got a

STANDING OVATION...

Which is not easy to do  
when the most of the audience  
is well over



The End

Six merits, Tom, and  
THREE GOLD STARS.

WELL DONE!

Mr Fullerman



Oh yes ... see those  
extra stars twinkling on the  
award chart!

**Excellent!**

★ **GOLD STAR AWARD CHART** ★  
 ★ ★ **CLASS 5F** ★ ★

**MARK CLUMP**

**ROSS WHITE**

**BRAD GALLOWAY**

**SOLOMAN STEWART**

**TOM GATES**

**PANSY BENNET**

**PAUL JOLLY**

**INDRANI HINDLE**

**LEROY LEWIS**

**FLORENCE MITCHELL**

**MARCUS MELDREW**

**JULIA MORTON**

**TREVOR PETERS**

**AMY PORTER**

**NORMAN WATSON**

**AMBER TULLEY GREEN**

## Question

What has Spots  
Not many gold ★ stars  
(NOW)

And looks slightly less smug than usual

## Answer

Ha! Ha!



MARCUS

(the cheater)

Finished reading  
this book **ALREADY?**  
You might like the same kind

of **FUNNY** stuff I do.

So check out my BLOG



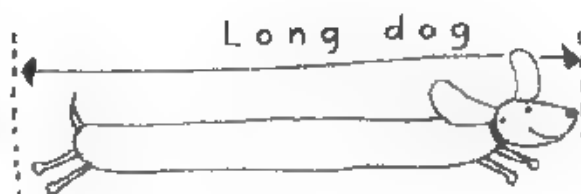
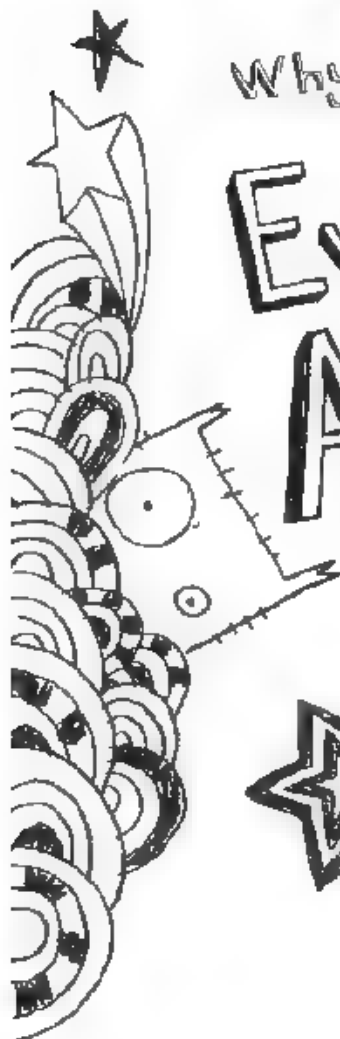


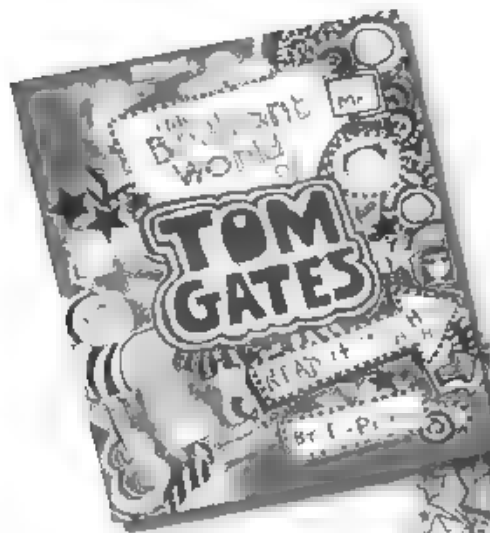
More doodles.  
More DOGZOMBIES  
and sadly more Marcus.



Why don't you check out  
my new diary...

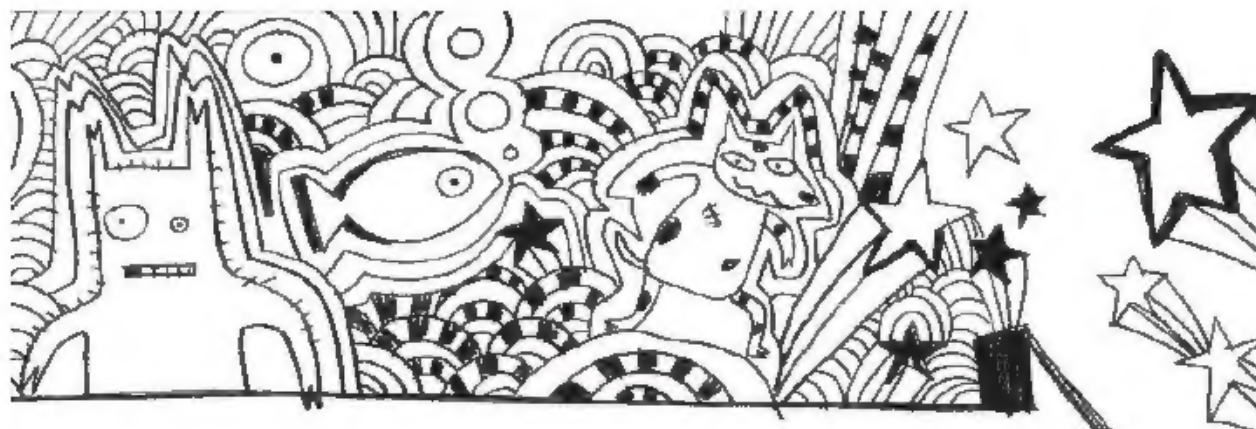
# Everything's Amazing (sort of)



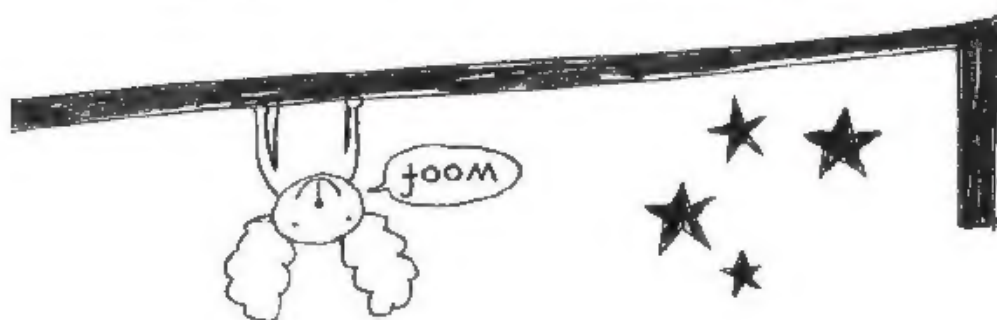


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Schoastic 2011





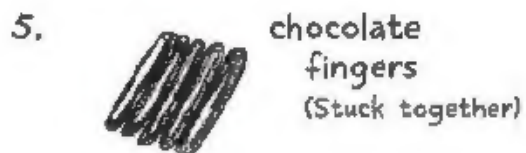
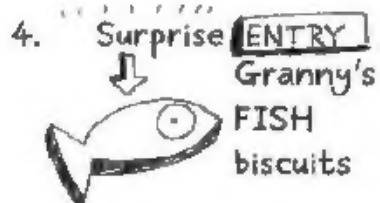
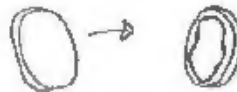
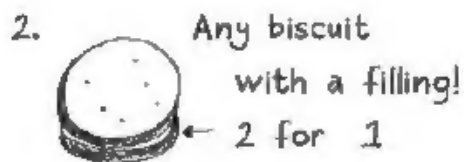
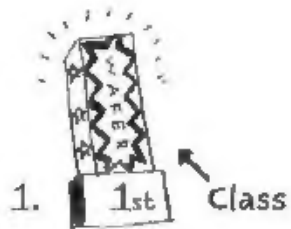
Good stuff

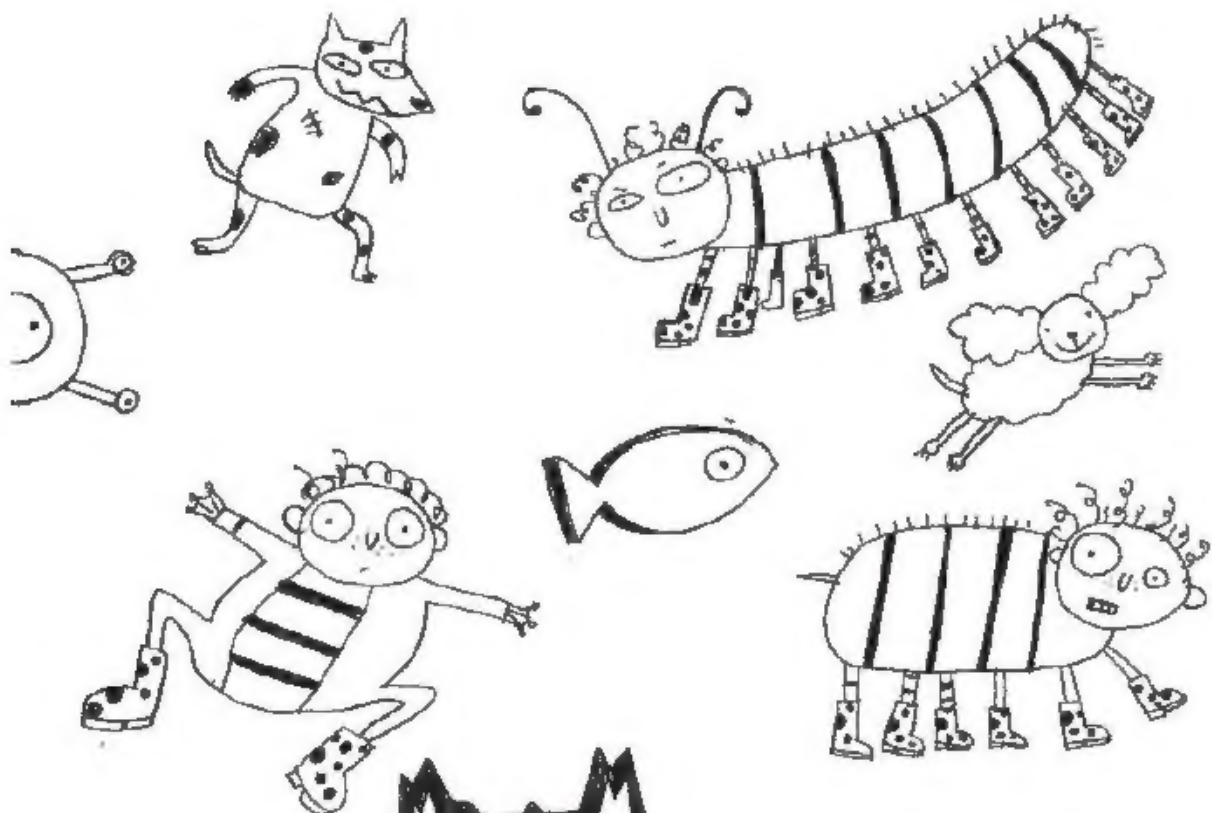


I won a **MASSIVE**  
pack of pens for coming (nearly)  
TOP of the Gold Star Chart  
AND a huge bar of chocolate  
(cocoa).



## My top five biscuits











# TOM GATES

## Gold Star Award Chart!

Getting to the TOP of Mr Fullerman's  AWARD chart is proving a bit TRICKY! This is mostly because:

1. Marcus Meldrew is a sneaky so-and-so and up to NO good, if you ask me. 

2. My tooth is aching SO much that I can't EVEN concentrate on drawing in class. 

3. I **keep** getting sidetracked by interesting activities like SWIMMING, bug catching and, most importantly, spending quality time **annoying** my sister Delia. 

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**RED HOUSE**  
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